



lection'97

INSIDE: WHAT ABOUT NEIL HAMILTON?
MORE BAD NEWS FOR THE MAN WHO
TOOK THE BISCUIT.
ON THE STUMP: 'PREMIER' BLAIR

Taking from Desmond Pitcher and giving to Poplar Joe: Labour's big idea?



Worlds apart: Sir Desmond Pitcher (left), chairman of United Utilities, epitomises the privatised industry chiefs who would be hit by a windfall tax proposed by Labour. Joe Vassallo, 19, stands for the intended beneficiaries. He lives in Poplar, east London, left school at 16 and has had more than one job. His last was as a screen-printer. He was sacked six months ago, he says, for taking time off when his mother was ill. Photographs: Andre Camara/John Voos

Anthony Bevins
Political Editor

Labour plans to impose a windfall tax on privatised industry fat-cats to finance a £2.5bn programme to take 250,000 unemployed young people off the dole was condemned "out of hand" by the Chancellor of the Exchequer yesterday.

But on the first full day of election campaigning Tony Blair warned that the do-nothing alternative threatened the creation of an alienated under-class: "If the Conservatives had come up with proposals such as this, people would have said, 'This is a revolution'."

A Labour brief on the job-creation policy said: "We must never again see a generation of people abandoned, to earn nothing and learn nothing."

But Kenneth Clarke, the

Chancellor of the Exchequer, said last night: "The latest windfall tax fiasco again shows that Labour are not fit to govern."

"Instead of saying 'which companies would pay the windfall tax', Labour are playing an absurd game, giving journalists a clue and daring them to work out the answer for themselves."

"This is no way to run a tax policy."

Labour's refusal to come clean on which companies would be hit and how heavily leaves millions of shareholders and pensioners in the dark. Without this basic information, people have no chance of working out how the windfall tax would hit their own investments or pensions.

The conclusion from Labour's windfall-tax fiasco is clear: you can't trust a shadow chancellor who refuses to answer the key questions on tax."

Gordon Brown, the shadow chancellor, announced at Labour's election press conference that Mr Blair would be appointing a new Cabinet minister with responsibility for employment and labour-market flexibility, which would include Social Chapter negotiations with European partners.

But the party also prompted the Chancellor's outrage by delivering its first list of candidates for the one-off £3bn windfall levy, which – depending on the definition of excess profits – could apply to British Telecom, water, gas and electricity companies, the British Airports Authority and privatised railway companies, but not British Airways.

"It is the party also that

has prompted the Chancellor's outrage by delivering its first list of candidates for the one-off £3bn windfall levy, which – depending on the definition of excess profits – could apply to British Telecom, water, gas and electricity companies, the British Airports Authority and privatised railway companies, but not British Airways.

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press conference.

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had been reduced by almost 1 million since its December 1992 peak, but he was unable to tell the *Independent* whether unemployment had risen or fallen since Mr Major became Prime Minister in 1990.

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was 1,778,000 in November 1990,

when Mr Major took office, and

it had not fallen below that figure since.

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about are their own."

In a prepared statement on

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press conference: "How can you trust a shadow prime minister and a shadow chancellor who will not answer the straight question about which companies will pay the tax, when they obviously know who they intend to target?"

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about are their own."

In a prepared statement on

the Government's economic policy, Mr Clarke said at his press conference: "Today, Britain is booming, without going

into recession."

"We have unlocked Britain's potential and over the next five years we intend to make sure Britain realises that potential ...

"By contrast, Labour's great leap backwards into social democracy would put Britain's future at risk."

"It would be an escape from reality, a holiday from history which this nation cannot afford."

Later, Mr Blair opened up a second battle-front when he used Commons question time to tackle Mr Major on health authority deficits.

With health a prime concern for the voters, Mr Blair said it was a "tragedy and a disgrace" that after 18 years of Tory government, waiting-lists were up,

hospitals were suffering from cash and staff shortages and non-emergency surgery was being cancelled.

The Prime Minister pointed

out that only the Tories were

committed to increasing funding

year-on-year, through the

next Parliament, and he added:

"Labour may have set up the

health service but we have built it up."

Labour later issued a list of

nine health authorities for

which the Conservatives

claimed "real growth" in bud-

gets for 1997-98 would not cov-

er the 1996-97 deficit.

The last Prime Minister's

question time of the Parlia-

ment will be staged tomorrow,

with the current Parliament

rising for good on Friday.

Still time to register

There are only two days left until the voting registration deadline.

Electoral registration offices of councils around the country will be open until the close of business tomorrow. To register, potential voters must be able to show proof of an address (from a gas or phone bill, for example) which dates back to October 1996.

proportion that the forecast deficit was a small proportion of the overall NHS budget.

The last Prime Minister's question time of the Parliament will be staged tomorrow, with the current Parliament rising for good on Friday.

Thirty-two simple ways to describe a woman (if you'll pardon our French)

John Lichfield
Paris

er. This is not the view of Jean-Pierre Goudalier, professor of linguistics at the Sorbonne, who has published the first dictionary of words torn directly from the mouths, the rap songs and the graffiti of the *banlieue* in 1990.

Mr Goudalier says his purpose is not to judge whether or not French is being deformed by such words. He says he undertook the work in order to study the "dynamics" of an an-

evolving language."

But the professor has clear-

ly fallen in love with the bewil-

dering richness of

contemporary youth slang in urban France, drawn partly from English, partly from the old French *argot*, but increasingly from Arabic and North and West African languages.

The dictionary is called *Com-*

ment tu tchatches, which trans-

lates, rather loosely as: "How

you can gab" or "How you can

rap." The verb *tchatcher* –

meaning to "talk without saying

very much", derived from a

Spanish word via Algerian Ara-

bia – is at the heart of life in the

violence-haunted and job-free

suburbs, according to Mr

Goudalier.

The greatest badge of honour for a young suburb-dweller is to be a good *tchatcheur* or *flâneur* or *piépiedre*.

The book records eight dif- ferent ways of saying bloke: *hamster*, *gadjo*, *keum*, *lascar*, *ombo*, *poyo*, *raclo* and *seclaro*.

But, doubtless reflecting a

brutally male-oriented culture,

there are 32 ways of saying

woman with varying degrees of

politeness: *meuf*, *belette*, *callie*, *clira*, *dama*, *damochie*,

dig, *fama*, *fébosse*, *feumeu*, *filasse*, *gadjé*, *gavall*, *gazelle* ...

and so on. A beautiful woman is a *Muro* after the site of the French

nuclear bomb tests. A not es-

pecially well-endowed woman is a *Findus*, after the company

which makes frozen fish fast

food. Her opposite would have large *airbros*, *ananas*, *hazels* or *rovers*.

Here is an example of a complete sentence collected by Mr Goudalier direct from the *banlieue*: "Cette meuf, elle est rellement malade, elle a pas d'airbros, qu'en peut la fater."

This translates, rather lame- ly, as "that bird is so thin. She has no boobs. You could fax her."

People's army scores victory over British

Stephen Vines
Hong Kong

Wach, have been diplomatically letting the incoming military side score a victory?

Absolutely not, insisted the

battalion's commanding offi-

cer Lieutenant Colonel Alasdair

Louden. "We wanted to win –

you could see by the tackles."

All the worse for them, then.

China's People's Libera-

tion Army (PLA) had scored a de-

cisive victory over the British

Army. The battleground, nev-

ertheless, was a rugby pitch in

Hong Kong where the PLA

triumphed by 12 points to 7.

The Chinese will arrive in

Hong Kong in three months

time, replacing the British as the

garrison. Could the British side,

largely composed of members of

the 1st Battalion of the Black

significant shorts

Legal aid victory in battle for equal right to ride

Two women fighting a court battle to be part of a centuries-old all-male riding festival have been granted legal aid. Mandy Graham, 21, and Ashley Simpson, 24, are challenging a decision to ban them from last year's Hawick Common Riding Festival, saying the decision was unlawful under the Sex Discrimination Act 1975.

They have already been granted £2,500 by the Equal Opportunities Commission to proceed with their case. And yesterday Sheriff Brian Donald was told that they had also been granted legal aid for their battle. The sheriff was hearing legal arguments from lawyers representing the women and last year's riding committee at Jedburgh sheriff court in the Scottish Borders. After listening to six hours of argument, he reserved judgment on the matter. He is expected to issue a written decision in the next few weeks and could recommend that the matter goes to a full hearing with witnesses being called.

Hepatitis victim asked to give blood

Ireland's blood transfusion authority sought a blood donation from a woman diagnosed two years earlier as infected with the hepatitis C virus by one of the service's own plasma products. The revelation yesterday came just days after a damning report was published into the scandal of how 970 mothers were infected by plasma made from 1970 donations from a woman known to have jaundice.

Rock star speaks up for boat victim



Pete Townshend of The Who told a High Court judge in London yesterday of the "exceptional" style and virtuosity of a saxophonist whose career was destroyed by the *Marchioness* disaster.

Jo Wells was rescued after spending three minutes under water when the River Thames pleasure cruiser collided with the sand dredger, *Bowdelle*, in August 1989. She escaped with minor injuries, but her "glittering" life performing "at the high level" with top rock acts including Tears for Fears and the Communards came to an end.

The owners of the *Bowdelle* have accepted liability for the tragedy, but are contesting the amount of compensation, claiming that Ms Wells was burned out before the accident and had not played professionally for 18 months.

Townshend (below), who employed her as a session musician in 1986, told the judge yesterday that Ms Wells could have looked forward to a career at the top of her profession earning up to £3,000 a week.

"I really stuck in my mind. She was absolutely exceptional both technically and imaginatively."

"She was the best soprano saxophone player I have ever heard in pop an unassuming figure who burst into life when she was playing. I was quite intimidated by her, how good she was," he said.

Family says Congo death 'stupid'

The brother of a British surgeon shot dead in the Congo said last night that the family were feeling last night at the "stupidity" of the tragedy. Ben Dalton, 29, from south London, was gunned down after a row with a policeman. As his parents flew out to the Congo, Mr Dalton's brother Will, 26, said that the family hoped that the killer would be found, but he dismissed as "unbelievable" a suggestion that the row with the policeman had been sparked by his brother, on a holiday trip with his wife and British friends, refusing to pay a small bribe.

Africa tale wins Orwell prize

A revealing story of childhood and adolescence in southern Africa during a time of acute social and political crisis has won the 1996 Orwell Prize for literature. Peter Godwin's *Mukwana: a White Boy in Africa*, describes childhood in Rhodesia, youth as an officer in the British South Africa police and adulthood as a young journalist in Zimbabwe. The Orwell Prize judges called it a "shrewd and witty examination of the conflict and confusion inherent in growing up in late twentieth century Africa". Members of the George Orwell Memorial Fund, who have hosted the £1,000 prize since 1992, presented the awards last night at London's Reform Club.

Matthew Brace

Drivers told to run trains past body

Up to twenty drivers were ordered to take their trains past the body of a young woman who was lying between the tracks, it has been revealed. Union officials claimed drivers were "traumatised" by the incident on Great Eastern's Shenfield to Southend line in Essex on 6 February this year.

It was nearly four hours before her body was removed. Aslef general secretary Lew Adams claimed that trains were not stopped because this would have meant Great Eastern would have faced penalty payments. But a Great Eastern spokeswoman said the company kept running the trains to avoid rush-hour delays.

Randeep Ramesh

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people



Sid Shaw: 'Elvis was up there somewhere smiling today' (Photograph: Peter Macdiarmid)

The King may be dead, but his name can live forever

The right of a British citizen to name his son, his dog or his goldfish "Elvis" was enshrined in a High Court judgment yesterday when an East End fan of the late singer won an historic victory over the powerful Presley estate. Sid Shaw, proprietor of Elvis Yours, in Shoreham High Street, was last night wiggling his pelvic in celebration of a judge's decision to allow him to use the Elvis name to sell memorabilia.

Mr Shaw had taken on the giant Elvis Presley Enterprises of America - headed by Priscilla Presley - to appeal against a decision by the Trade Marks Registry to allow only EPE to use the words Elvis, Elvis Presley or the signature of the dead singer.

Mr Justice Laddie could not agree with the registry. "Even if Elvis Presley was still alive," he speculated, "He would not be entitled to stop a fan from naming his son, his dog or goldfish, his car or his house 'Elvis' or 'Elvis Presley', simply by reason of the fact that it was the name given to him at birth."

Mr Shaw, who set up his shop in 1979, suggested after the hearing that "the King" had been on his side. "Elvis was up there somewhere smiling today," he said.

The bitter wrangle began when some of Mr Shaw's

range of 400 Elvis products found their way from east London to the gates of Graceland, Elvis's home in Memphis, Tennessee, where they were sold to tourists.

EPE, which is based at Graceland and through Priscilla is the legal inheritor of the Elvis Presley estate, took exception to the products. In 1997, EPE registered the names, despite objections from Mr Shaw, who claimed that, as result, EPE had a virtual monopoly on Elvis memorabilia throughout the world. He decided to ask a High Court judge to decide if anyone could claim exclusive rights to use the name.

At the hearing, Peter Prescott, for EPE, argued that, when people bought souvenirs of their heroes they wanted them to come from a "genuine source".

But the judge said: "Just as Elvis Presley did not own his name so as to be able to prevent all and any use of it by third parties, so EPE can have no greater rights."

Elvis impersonators also had reason to celebrate as the judge added: "Priscilla did not own his appearance - for example, during his life he could not prevent a fan from having a tattoo or a drawing on his car which looked like the musician, simply by the basis that it was his appearance which was distinctive."

The bitter wrangle began when some of Mr Shaw's

After 30 years, Damon follows father to Palace

Damon Hill, who followed his father's tracks to become world motor racing champion, yesterday re-traced Graham Hill's footsteps to Buckingham Palace to receive an OBE from the Queen.

Indeed, the last time Damon was at Buckingham Palace, he was just seven-years-old and sat in the ballroom to see his father receive the same honour. Graham Hill then pinned the medal on his young son (right).

Yesterday, almost 30 years later, it was his turn to be honoured in his own right. "The room seems smaller than I remember it," he said.

"I'm very, very proud to be honoured by the Queen and by the country in this way. It's an extremely precious thing."

The Queen was "up to speed" with her Formula 1 knowledge, said Hill. "She appreciated that it was a close finish last year. And she also knows that it is going to be a tight tussle this year."

Damon, who won the 1996 world driver's championship with the Williams team, is now strug-



gling to return to the top flight with the Yamaha Arrows team. Just nine days ago, his Yamaha car failed to start in the Australian Grand Prix at Melbourne.

"We're going to Brazil next week for the next grand prix and looking forward to doing better," he said.

The former England and Surrey cricketer, Sir Alec Bedser, was knighted by the Queen.

Accompanied by his twin brother Eric, 78-year-old Sir Alec said: "It's a long way from walking through the gates of the Oval in 1938, as a member of the ground staff."

The Restoricks were escorted by their son's commanding officer, Lt Col Matthew Sykes, and Battery Commander Major Mark Vincent.

Afterwards, inside the heavily

Soldier's family on sad pilgrimage

The parents of a young soldier shot dead by the IRA in Northern Ireland yesterday made a painful pilgrimage to the spot where he died.

John and Rita Restorick fought back tears as they laid flowers by the checkpoint outside the military base at Bessbrook in South Armagh where their son, Stephen, was murdered last month. Clutching each other's hands tightly, they placed their floral tribute among dozens of others left by local people.

They were accompanied on their journey from Peterborough by their other son, Mark, 26, and eight uncles, aunts and cousins.

Lance Bombardier Restorick, 23, of the 3rd Battalion Royal Horse Artillery was killed by a single shot fired at long range by a hidden sniper as he manned the checkpoint.

The Restoricks were escorted by their son's commanding officer, Lt Col Matthew Sykes, and Battery Commander Major Mark Vincent.

Afterwards, inside the heavily

fortified base, they attended a service to dedicate a marble memorial to Stephen.

briefing

ENVIRONMENT

Government warned of water shortage ahead

The Government's Environment Agency warned yesterday that low groundwater levels could lead to hosepipe bans and other restrictions on water use in parts of south-east England and East Anglia this summer. In a drought briefing for the Department of Environment, the agency said water tables in several areas which depend on boreholes for their supply were still depressed, to record levels in some, after a low rainfall period which started in April 1995.

The shortfall over the two-year period amounts to four months of missed rain. While February brought a welcome deluge with well above average rainfall, March so far has had significantly below the average.

The agency has asked water companies to submit detailed plans on how they intend to manage supplies. Few companies have so far applied to take extra water above their licensed level from rivers and groundwater in the summer but several have already been granted permission to take extra river water in the winter, using it to refill reservoirs.

Groundwater levels are drawn down more slowly than reservoirs during dry periods but they also take longer to recover. Underground aquifers of porous rock provide more than two-thirds of tapwater in southern England, almost half the water for East Anglia and more than a third of the Thames valley area's supply.

Nicholas Schoon

HEALTH

Young face dance culture danger

A quarter of young people aged 18 to 25 are exposing themselves to noise levels that can cause permanent hearing damage, an expert warned yesterday. Clubs where deafening music is played for hours on end were the chief danger, accounting for two-thirds of the noise sources, said Professor Adrian Davis. Personal stereos and other noisy leisure activities, like shooting, were also a risk.

Professor Davis, from the Medical Research Council Institute of Hearing Research, Nottingham, is carrying out research into the effect of dance culture noise on the young. He expects to publish the results at an International conference on hearing loss next month.

In the 1980s, between 6 and 7 per cent of young people were exposed to leisure noise loud enough to damage hearing, said the professor. In the 1990s this proportion had risen to as high as 24 per cent.

Professor Davis said his research had "disappointingly" not been able to show that young climbers were hard of hearing. But a quarter of them suffered continual ringing in the ears, and they were likely to hasten the onset of deafness that is a normal part of ageing. "They will be more susceptible to the ravages of age than other people," he said.



ROADS

Bypass cost to nature is too high

A Government agency yesterday expressed concern about the impact of the proposed Salisbury bypass. In a report, the Highways Agency has backed English Nature, the Government's wildlife advisor, in saying that the "impacts and the risk [of the bypass] are unacceptable high from a nature conservation point of view."

The agency has identified two alternative routes across the Avon Valley, south of Salisbury, Wiltshire, which would avoid the need to take land from East Hamham Meadows, a newly designated site of Special Scientific Interest.

The report was ordered by Sir George Young, the Secretary of State for Transport, and John Gummer, the Secretary of State for the Environment, last October after the Government decided it was "minded to approve" the 11-mile bypass. It will now go out to consultation with interested parties.

Plans for the bypass, which would ruin the image - immortalised by Constable - of Salisbury Cathedral viewed across the water meadows, have been widely condemned by organisations including Friends of the Earth (FoE) and the Countryside Commission, the Government's official advisors on the countryside.

Louise Jury

PAY

Upward mobility becoming rarer

The chances of climbing up the income scale from a low-paying job have shrunk dramatically during the past two decades. Figures on the earnings of individuals tracked over time show that fewer than one in four on low pay at the start of their working life in 1979 had reached the top half of the earnings distribution by 1994.

Only half had made any advance up the ladder at all, according to new research published this morning. The rest were either still at the bottom of the pile or had become unemployed.

The research, based on figures published by the Department of Social Security, challenges Tory claims that greater income inequality has been offset by greater upward wage mobility. Richard Dickens of the London School of Economics, writing for the Employment Policy Institute, says the claims ignore both moves into unemployment and the fact that most people whose incomes do rise do not move very far up the scale.

Diane Coyle



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150 من الأصل

British biggest worriers in Europe on schools

Jojo Moyes

Concern and Marie Stopes International, one of the largest of its kind ever undertaken - show clear contrasts between the fears of Britons and those of Europe as a whole.

Nearly half of Britons (48 per cent) gave unemployment as their biggest concern - significantly less than the 59 per cent of people across Europe. Fears about jobs are most prominent in Finland (85 per cent), France and Sweden (78 per cent), and Germany and Spain (more than 70 per cent).

But law and order was a much bigger concern than elsewhere in Europe, cited by al-

most a third (32 per cent) of British respondents compared with 20 per cent across the Continent. Education is also a much bigger worry for Britons than elsewhere in Europe, with 30 per cent of Britons naming it as their main concern, compared to just 6 per cent elsewhere. The state of schools does not make the EU top ten list of issues.

But it is responses to the questions about global con-

cerns which have worried the two charities behind the survey.

The issue of population in-

crease is the eighth most press-

ing concern for Europeans,

while related issues such as re-

productive health and rights and

women's rights scored very low,

a sustained European-wide campaign to raise awareness about population issues and the rights of all people to access reproductive health care and good family planning," said Pa-

tricia Hindmarsh of Marie

Stopes International.

Population growth scored 12 per cent in Britain and the EU, but related issues like repro-

ductive health, gender rights and

adolescent sexuality are rated by

little more than one per cent of

the representative sample of 937

British adults. Aids and other

sexually transmitted diseases

get a 14 per cent global concern

rating across the EU, compared

with just 3 per cent in Britain.

Child sex abuse worries 2 per cent of Britons, almost the low-

est figure in the EU. The pro-

portion is highest (18 per cent)

in Belgium, scene of high-level

scandals over paedophile rings.

Wendy Thomas, director of

Population Concern, said the fig-

ures showed that a welcome 71

per cent of Britons backed more

general family planning advice for

developing countries.

But the proportion seeing the

need for young people in those

countries to protect themselves

from unwanted pregnancy was

only an "alarming" 42 per cent.

"With close to half the pop-

ulation of many poor countries

under the age of 15, the neglect

of young people's sexual and

reproductive health worldwide is

a crisis in the making that will

hamstring other development

efforts," she said.

Topics which worry the

British less than their neigh-

hours across the Channel in-

clude the economy, drug abuse,

race relations and AIDS. Two

out of five Britons and Euro-

peans agree that war and civil

conflict is the main problem.

Environment and pollution,

famine, poverty and unem-

ployment also get high ratings

across the EU.

While related issues such as re-

productive health and rights and

women's rights scored very low,

"There is clearly a need for

Publishing wizard fights to rescue his exploded books

Tom Stevenson
City Editor

Dorling Kindersley, whose illustrated books and, more recently, CD-Roms have delighted children and their thankful parents for two decades, has become the latest innovative British company to discover that beautiful products alone will not conquer America.

Citing a flood of critical acclaim for its books and compact discs, Dorling Kindersley insisted yesterday its 23-year success story would continue, but, it admitted that problems in the United States had pushed it off track after years of rapid growth.

Echoes of previous high-fliers such as Sock Shop that crashed to earth in the US have sent investors in the company rushing for the exits and Dorling Kindersley joins a long list of stars over here that have failed to shine over there.

Peter Kindersley, the company's multi-millionaire founder, remained defiantly positive yesterday despite causing consternation in the City with a warning that American profits, which have driven the company's dramatic recent growth, were flagging.

Struggling off a fall of almost £100m in his family's private fortune over the past year, thanks to a collapse in the value of its shares in DK, Mr Kindersley painted a bright future which the flow of middle class favourites like *The Royal Horticultural Society's Plant Encyclopedia* and this year's star launch, an interactive children's CD-Rom encyclopedia, will continue unabated.

Dorling Kindersley, which despite becoming one of Britain's biggest companies still operates from a collection of elegant town houses in London's Covent Garden, proved yesterday it is better at pleasing children than the City's unsentimental fund managers. It's shares which cost 645p a year ago were worth only 270p yesterday after the company told investors for the second time in three months that its profits would be worse than expected.

But the company insisted its problems were one-off blips and nothing to do with its products which remain popular. It blamed the soaring pound for reducing the value of its overseas profits and an upheaval among US booksellers which has seen giant chains like



High-flyer: Peter Kindersley is hoping that the company he created is not about to crash land

Photomontage: Jonathan Anstee

Barnes & Noble reducing their stocks of books and CD-Roms to try and stem heavy losses.

Founded in 1974 by Peter Kindersley and his partner Christopher Dorling, DK began by creating high-quality practical reference books, almost exclusively for adults. From the outset, the company's books stood out from its rivals by focusing on elegantly presented images at the expense of text and immediate public acclaim made a handful of titles in the 1970s million-copy best-sellers.

DK's most successful book to date, the *Family Medical Guide* has sold more than 6 million copies in 15 languages and visits to

cities around the world have become almost unthinkable for many travellers without a well-thumbed copy of the relevant Eyewitness Guide. The series, which now runs to 56 titles, has sold 18 million copies in 39 languages.

In 1987, Dorling moved into children's books and for 10 years has made learning a pleasure for thousands of absorbed children and their relieved (if considerably poorer) parents. From *The Ultimate Dinosaur Sticker Book* to *PB Bear's Birthday Party*, DK has effectively cornered a hugely lucrative market.

But the real excitement, according to Mr Kindersley, lies in what he describes as "the

digital future". For a man who has made a fortune out of the printed word he exudes enthusiasm for the interactive PC world in which his books' images spring to life. After three years of development, DK will this year launch its latest, *3D Children's Encyclopedia*, whose half a billion words, maps, pictures, video clips and music are expected to astonish any parent able to get near the family computer.

Alan Buckingham, who heads DK's multi-media operation, believes the CD-Rom market is set to explode in the next few years. In 1994, he says, there were around 12 million personal computers with CD-Rom drives

yes, three-quarters of them in America. By 2000 there will be an estimated 97 million.

Peter Kindersley dismisses recent problems in America as a distraction from long-term trends that will ensure the DK phenomenon continues unchecked.

He said: "Who would have thought the Learning Channel would be the fastest-growing cable channel in the US, or that the Discovery Channel would be sold in 122 markets. Globally more and more people are rediscovering learning and that being a self-educator can bring great benefits."

Shares crash, page 20

'Crash' is passed for uncut release

David Lister
Arts News Editor

The highly controversial film, *Crash*, which depicts characters being sexually aroused by graphic car crashes, was yesterday passed for release uncut by the British Board of Film Classification.

The board's director James Ferman said the "unusual and disturbing film" was neither illegal nor harmful. One of the characters in the film is disabled from a car crash. But the BBFC said it had showed the film to a top lawyer, a forensic psychologist and an audience of disabled people before granting it an 18 certificate.

David Cronenberg's adaptation of the novel by JG Ballard was the subject of a newspaper campaign to have it banned after its screening at the London Film Festival last year. Westminster Council, in London, gave it an interim ban. Until that is lifted, the number of cinemas at which *Crash* can be shown in London may be affected.

The film, starring the Oscar winner Holly Hunter, demands a strong stomach. But its opponents ignored the fact that its deliberately sterile atmosphere and the stress on the unfulfilled nature of the characters' relationships acted against it glamourising its subject matter.

The psychologist consulted by the BBFC said there was no sexual deviancy in the film, and that a notorious scene with a woman in calipers was not fetishistic because she was seen as attractive in spite of her scars and limb supports, not because of them.

The BBFC said disabled people shown the film believed the depiction of the woman struggling in calipers mirrored the difficulties that many of them had had to overcome.

Celebrities including Jeremy Irons, Nicolas Roeg, Michael Palin, Ken Loach and film producer Duncan Kenworthy had rallied to the film's defence. A spokesman for Columbia TriStar, the film's UK distributor, said: "We are thrilled the BBFC has finally given *Crash* the certificate it has always deserved."

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4 news

£10m a year wasted on unneeded Caesarians

Annabel Ferriman

Women are being subjected to unnecessary tests and Caesarean sections, wasting £10m annually and increasing ill-health, a new report from the Audit Commission says today.

The nationwide study, of 2,400 mothers reported wide geographical discrepancies in Caesarean rates which, the commission said, indicated that some doctors were too quick to rely on this method.

Women who had interventions during childbirth, including forceps deliveries and Caesareans, described "reduced levels of satisfaction and confidence", felt "less well supported" and suffered increased postnatal ill health, according to the report.

"There is general consensus that levels of Caesarean section are higher than are clinically required... Caesarean sections at trusts visited ranged from 11 per cent to 18 per cent of deliveries and vary more than twofold nationally [the average being 17 per cent]," the report said.

Obstetricians perform Caesarean sections for a variety of reasons, including abnormal foetal presentation, foetal distress and poor progress during labour.

The report said: "These interventions have important consequences, with women taking longer to recover and staying longer in hospital, making them more costly. A Caesarean section can cost in excess of £700".

The Audit Commission collected information from 13 NHS trusts, 12 commissioning authorities and 500 GPs, as well as from women who had given birth in June and July 1995.

Each year the NHS spends more than £1.1bn on maternity services for about 650,000 women, at a cost of about £1,700 per delivery. The commission found that many trusts

provided more antenatal check-ups than were needed for low-risk women and some relied too much on specialist involvement.

This was more expensive and less popular than local community services provided by midwives and GPs, and tied up resources worth £1bn annually, which could be better spent on providing better information to women, said the report.

Although health authorities and trusts have been encouraged to take a more woman-centred approach, since the publication of *Changing Childbirth*, by the government-appointed Expert Maternity Group in 1993, the commission says that they could do more.

In many ways, the report is an indictment of the hospital services, showing that less than half of pregnant women feel that hospital staff gave them confidence and less than two in five feel that someone got to know them.

One in four women reported being left alone in labour, at a time that worried them.

Ms Beverley Fitzsimons, project manager at the commission, said: "Health authorities have got to use a variety of means to find out what women want, including consulting local maternity services liaison committees. "We found the general growth in Caesarean sections worrying, and the variation between trusts worrying. We do not believe that there is such a thing as "a correct rate", but a rate which is right for the particular case mix. We would recommend that each trust reviews its Caesarean rate to see whether it is justified."

Postnatal hospital care came in for the most critical comment, with women complaining about "poor food and hygiene, cramped bathrooms and inadequate eating areas." They also felt that different professionals gave them conflicting advice on breast feeding.



Tiny tartan: Young members of the Wallace clan rehearsing for today's 'Braveheart Walk' at Stirling Castle

WEDNESDAY 19 MARCH 1997 • THE INDEPENDENT

Evans is sued on terrorist remark

Ian Burnell

The Birmingham Six yesterday served a libel writ on Tory MP David Evans over remarks allegedly made during an interview with sixth-formers.

Supporters of the Birmingham Six said the comments, which apparently questioned the men's innocence of the 1974 pub bombings, were deeply hurtful and came as their final compensation claims were still being settled.

The writ was served on Mr Evans's solicitors by agents of the men's lawyers, London-based BM Birnberg & Co.

Benedict Birnberg said the action was prompted by remarks allegedly made by Mr Evans when he addressed schoolchildren in Welwyn Garden City last month.

Mr Birnberg said he wrote to Mr Evans about the comments in early March but, when no reply was received, a writ was issued last Friday and served yesterday. "We are seeking damages and an injunction preventing him from saying these things again," he said.

Michael Collins from the British and Irish Human Rights Centre, which campaigns for the men, said: "Mr Evans' remarks were ill-judged and irresponsible, particularly coming from a Member of Parliament."

"The Birmingham Six case was settled, and they proved their innocence. Any attempt to impugn their integrity must be fought. They are quite right to take legal action to protect their reputation. These sort of remarks are deeply hurtful."

The men's lawyers were seeking a judicial review in a bid to finalise compensation claims, he said. "Their compensation has still not been settled, although substantial interim payments have been made."

Their marriages have broken down, their children grown up, and their worth was taken away while they were in prison. They have found it virtually impossible to get work, and yet no settlement has been made."

Mr Evans' talk with sixth-formers at Stanborough School caused a storm of protest when details of what he had said reached the media.

Masons told to reveal themselves

Christian Wolmar
Westminster Correspondent

The days of freemasonry as a secret organisation may be numbered. Freemasons in the police force and the judiciary should be forced to disclose their membership of the organisation, an all-party group of MPs will recommend in a report to be published next week.

The recommendation will send shock waves through the 7,823 lodges and 349,213 masons around the country for whom secrecy has always been sacred. Membership of lodges may decline if men joining them are no longer able to keep their membership secret.

However, the committee is unlikely to make recommendations on how registers should be kept and whether they should be open to everyone or only to relevant parties.

A new Labour government is likely to seize on the recommendation, especially as Jack Straw, the shadow Home Secretary, suggested in his evidence that there should be a register for defence and prosecution lawyers in court cases.

The Home Affairs Committee, which has spent the past six months examining masonry in the police and judiciary, has been inundated with over 200 submissions and its members have been influenced by the fact that so many have recommended that masons in public

life should declare themselves.

Several bodies involved in the administration of the law and the judiciary have submitted evidence recommending more openness about freemasonry. For example, the Law Society, which represents solicitors, said there were a number of options, including some form of registration system by the Lord Chancellor's Office for judges and chief constables for police.

The Association of Chief Police Officers also said it was prepared to support a register, although it did not specify how it should be done. Among police groups, only the Police Federation, which represents lower ranks, is completely opposed.

MPs on the committee have been surprised that freemasonry is not as prevalent among the judiciary and the police as expected. Of the 130 senior judges, only a handful are masons according to evidence given to the committee. This is seen as a decline in the prevalence of masonry since it first started attracting major media attention in the mid 1980s.

Among a sample of local magistrates for which evidence was obtained, between a sixth and a third were masons in one area, while freemasonry was less common in other areas.

Supporters of disclosure point out that freemasonry only became very secretive after the Second World War and until

then members did not necessarily hide the fact that they belonged to a lodge.

The members of the Home Affairs committee have not been divided solely on party lines with some Tory MPs supporting a disclosure of membership by freemasons, while some Labour MPs have expressed opposition. The inquiry into freemasonry was first suggested by a Labour member of the committee, Chris Mullin, who was disturbed at the number of freemasons who appeared to be involved in the Birmingham Six case. However, it took two years for the enquiry by MPs to start after they had agreed to instigate it in July 1994.

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Mad cow legacy will last into next century

Charles Arthur
Science Editor

The legacy of mad cow disease will last far longer than the disease itself. While the number of cases of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) is falling rapidly, the political, medical, economic and legal ramifications will follow us into the next century.

It is a year tomorrow that Stephen Dorrell, the Secretary of State for Health, said the Government recognised a link between exposure to the agent that causes bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) in cows

and a variant of the fatal brain disorder Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease (CJD) in humans.

At that time, there were 10 confirmed cases of v-CJD, as doctors now refer to it. It was unknown before 1994.

Now there are 17 definite and probable cases, according to the support network set up by victims' families. The possibility remains that thousands will eventually die of it, according to Professor John Pattison, the scientist who chairs of Seac, the Government's advisory com-

mittee on BSE and CJD.

The problem is that nobody knows how many people have been exposed to how much of the infective agent, nor how long it takes to incubate before causing clinical symptoms.

Estimates vary from 15 years upwards. Precautions taken since last March have reduced the risk that BSE-infected products could enter the human food supply but scientists still argue about how infective meat or other tissues could be.

The certainty is that the num-

ber of cows with the disease is tailing off. Last year, there were only 7,709 confirmed cases in the UK, less than 0.1 per cent of the national herd, and this year there have been 177, so far. At the peak in 1992, there were almost 37,000 confirmed cases. In total, more than 166,000 BSE-infected cattle have been slaughtered.

But the economic effect lingers. Britain's £500m beef export market is still moribund, as it has been since 27 March last year, when the European Com-

mission banned exports, fearful of the effect of BSE on world markets.

John Major's "beef war" of non-cooperation with the EC last summer was short-lived.

The Ministry of Agriculture,

Fisheries and Food (Maff) now

says it has complied with the EC's requirements for the lifting of the ban, introducing a cull of cattle and new inspection and certification of herds and meat, but does not know when the Commission ban will be lifted.

The EC shows no signs of

hurrying. Several countries on the Continent are facing their own BSE fears, with suggestions that France and Germany have covered up cases. The deaths of two people in France and one in Germany of suspected v-CJD has added to these worries.

But even when the ban is lifted, Britain's herds have been decimated, and exporters will have to break into markets that have been taken over by rivals.

At home, the political effect

has been immense. Mr Major

lost face over his about-turn

Douglas Hogg, Secretary of State for Agriculture, has been pummeled over his department's failure to stamp out BSE. The issue has widened Tory divisions on Europe.

More importantly, the fallout from BSE has enraged farmers and will cost the Tories important votes in constituencies they once relied on. Some farmers are prepared to break the habit of a lifetime and not vote Conservative in the coming election, especially in the West Country.

The permanent losers are the

families and relatives of those who have had, or will have, v-CJD. It affects young people and is always fatal.

The prospects for treatment are minimal. Scientists are still unsure whether the disease is caused by a misshapen protein, the "prion" hypothesis, or a related effect which causes the protein to accumulate in insoluble plaques in the brain.

Professor John Collinge, who last year demonstrated that the molecular "signature" of the plaques of BSE and v-CJD is almost identical, believes a therapy is at least 10 years away.

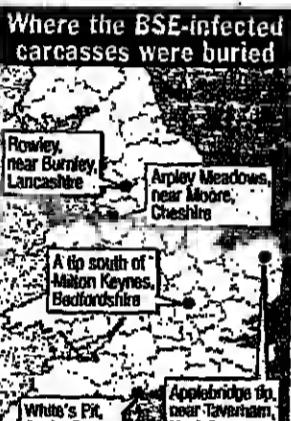
Letters, page 17

Concern over infected cow burial sites

Charles Arthur

Investigations by *The Independent* have found a number of sites around England where BSE-infected carcasses with the heads removed were legally buried before 1991, when government advice was changed to insist that cows with BSE must be incinerated except in unusual circumstances.

The sites identified are in a variety of counties, including Bedfordshire, Cheshire, Dorset,

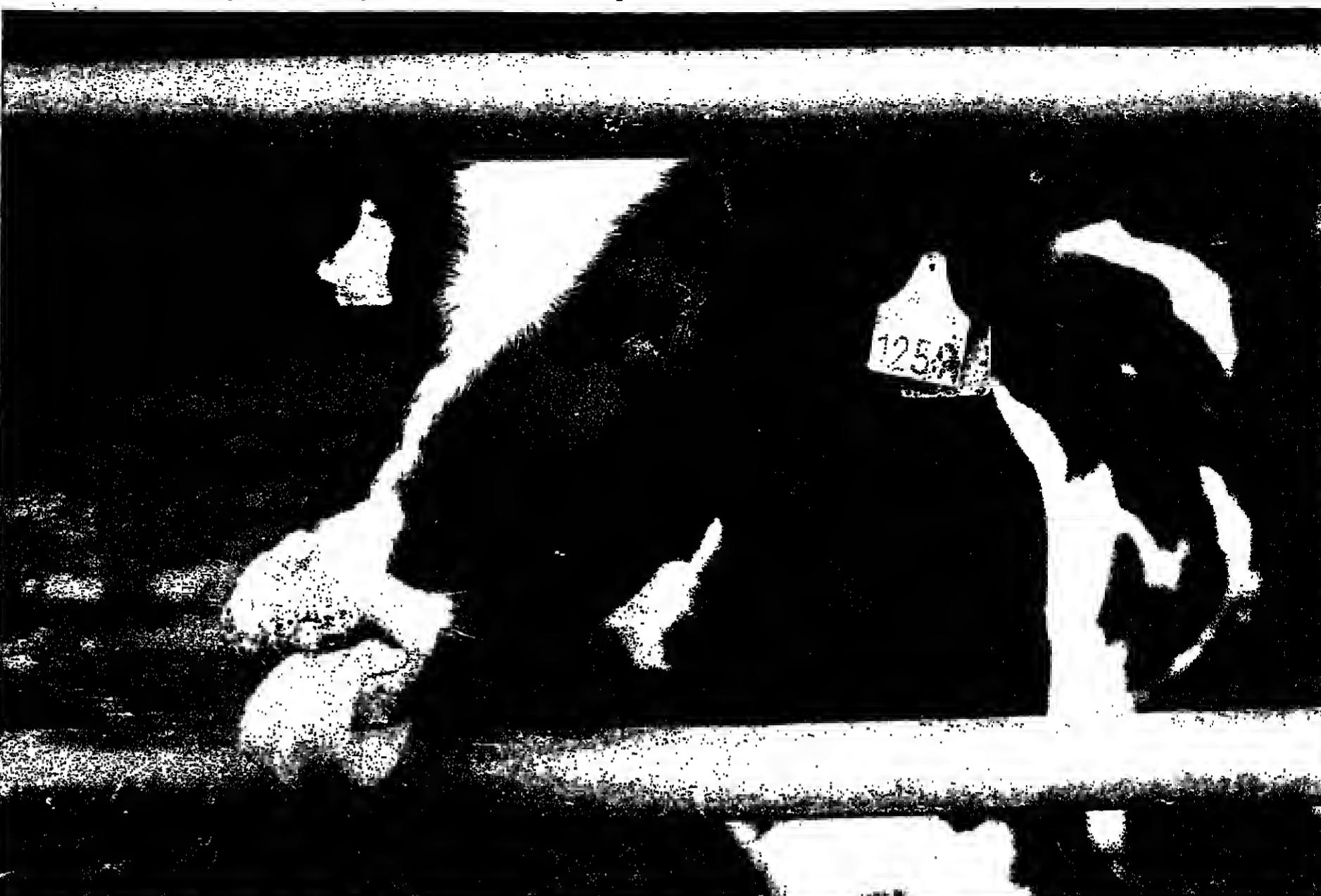


Lancaster and Norfolk. It's not known, though, how many of the 6,117 BSE-infected cattle that the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Maff) said have been buried in landfills since 1986 are located at these sites. Maff staff are now urgently compiling a centralized list.

The sites identified by *The Independent* are:

■ A tip operated by Shanks McEwan - south of Milton Keynes, Bedfordshire. Rail freight workers recall a delivery of infected cattle before 1990.

■ A tip operated by Shanks McEwan - south of Milton Keynes, Bedfordshire. Rail freight workers recall a delivery of infected cattle before 1990.



Looking to the future: One of the calves from the pedigree herd at Kennels Farm, Bletchingley, Surrey, which will replace cattle that have to be culled. Photograph: John Voos

Agonising decline that led to first diagnosis of new illness

Stephen Churchill's parents realize now that the car crash was the first sign, writes Charles Arthur.

"It was about August. He was simply driving near home in his mum's Ford Fiesta and he went across the white line, head-on to an oncoming army truck," said Dave Churchill. Stephen's

father, the car was a write-off. Stephen couldn't explain what had happened. Nor could his passenger. Both were lucky to survive - "long legs, and a seat a long way back," said Mr Churchill yesterday.

But for that, the first Briton to die of the "new variant" of Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease

might have been just another road statistic.

Mr Churchill feels now that the disease's name (v-CJD) is confusing: "It would be better to call it something else, like 'frold plaque disease' - which is what you see in the brain sections - to distinguish it from the normal form," he said.

The "sporadic" form of CJD usually affects people over 60, and has no known cause. By contrast, v-CJD has so far affected people under 50, and is almost certainly caused by eating BSE-infected food.

But the Churchills had no inkling of that. Instead, they endured months in which the 18-year-old slipped into an incurable, remote depression and gave up school. In November, his mother took him out shopping, and stopped at a cafeteria. They ate a small meal and went back out to the car. "Did you enjoy that?" she asked. Stephen didn't remember it.

Doctors insisted it was simply depression. Stephen was given medication. By December he was losing his co-ordination and could not sign his name. He spent that Christmas with them - "the most miserable we've ever had", recalled Mr Churchill.

It was so bad that on 3 January 1995 they demanded another consultation with the psychiatrist. Stephen was admitted to hospital. The doctors seemed reluctant to diagnose CJD in an 18-year-old - it would make medical history - but on 12 February they did. Mr Churchill recalls his frustration. A diagnosis "would not have helped Stephen, but it would have taken away the doubt, which is what breeds fear".

Early in May, Stephen was released into a care home, where his family recreated his own bedroom - "his Pamela Anderson posters, his beer bottle collection, all those things". They were prepared for his

inevitable death to take years; instead, he died two weeks later, on 21 May - the first, and youngest, Briton to die of v-CJD.

When Stephen Dorrell made his fateful announcement last March, "it gave me a focus for my anger", said Mr Churchill. "It's as if Stephen had been killed by a hit-and-run driver, and then 10 months later the police come and say 'By the way, we've arrested so-and-so who

lives down the road'." Since then, the Churchills have applied pressure for a judicial review. They have never directly blamed beef for their son's death, preferring to let the scientists do that. "We just ask questions," said Mr Churchill.

After Stephen died, the Churchills became closely involved with the national CJD Support Group. Mr Churchill's advice to anybody whose child or relative dies of v-CJD is: "We would encourage anybody to go to the media after their loss."

Publicity is a weapon, he believes, which will eventually cut to the answer: whose fault was it that these people died?

The National CJD Helpline is on 01380 720033.

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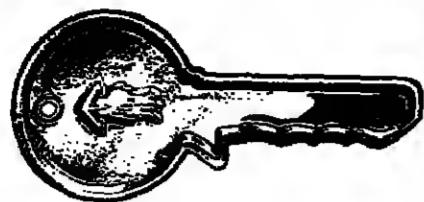
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Penguin wins its suit as Puffin gets the crumbs in battle of the biscuits

Ian Burrell

Asda, the supermarket chain, may have to pay up a bill for damages after the judge in the great chocolate biscuit case ruled that its Puffin brand was a copy of the famous Penguin.

Mr Justice Robert Walker found Asda guilty of passing-off, but allowed the supermarket to continue making its biscuits provided it amended the packaging. United Biscuits had sued Asda on the grounds that the supermarket's product was a copy of its 60-year-old brand.

The seven-day hearing at the High Court in London was supposed to end the confusion of the shopper hut ended up baffling the biscuit-makers, both of which claimed a victory. Asda said it would continue to sell Puffins after "tweaking" the packaging, although it admitted that it was unsure what changes the judge had in mind.

Mr Justice Walker's 35-page judgment included his "judicial notice of relevant ornithology". After noting the differences between the two birds

Latin names, plumage and nesting places, he admitted: "My own knowledge has been supplemented considerably from a handbook which counsel showed me."

In a judgment punctuated by pictures of Puffins and Penguins, the judge referred to various images used by UB over the years, including Penguins in rubber boots, chef's hat and ice skates and scarf. Recently UB had gone

back to using more naturalistic penguins - "not encumbered by boots, skates or other paraphernalia".

The judge said that had the Asda product been called "Bison" with an appropriate cartoon, the case would never have been brought. "The word Puffin is not very different in form from Penguin," he observed, and concluded: "The Puffin packaging and get up was, in the material sense, deceptive

ly similar to those of the Penguin." He ordered an inquiry into the amount of damages suffered by UB as a result of the Asda product.

UB's sales of McVities Penguins amount to £30m a year with more than £4m spent annually on advertising. Asda's expenditure on developing and launching its rival last September was also substantial. The Puffin - 25 per cent cheaper than the Penguin - was

introduced at its 200-plus stores as a "brand beater".

The judge cleared Asda of infringing UB's registered trade marks - the name and pictures of the bird - except for two incidents when the supermarket went so far as to use the phrase "Pick up a Puffin" in its advertising. He granted a 35-day stay of execution to hundreds of thousands of Puffins awaiting sale in the old packaging.

Ruffled feathers: Asda staff demonstrating the difference in plumage outside the High Court yesterday

Photograph: Stefan Rousseau



Scrap BBC governors, say MPs

Paul McCann
Media Correspondent

A committee of MPs has condemned the BBC Board of Governors as a bunch of part-time amateurs threatening the future of the Corporation.

Parliament's National Heritage Select Committee, which yesterday released its long-awaited report, *The BBC and The Future Of Broadcasting* says the corporation cannot expect to survive in the coming age of new digital channels and interactive TV if it continues to be managed by part-timers with

no knowledge of broadcasting.

Instead, the committee, which is chaired by Gerald Kaufman, wants to see a hands-on executive chairman appointed by the Secretary of State for National Heritage who is backed up by a professional board of governors.

At present, the BBC's Board of Governors is comprised of the great and the good, such as former trade union leader Bill纵dan, Lord Lennox, a former ambassador to Spain and Margaret Spurr, a former head-teacher.

"The present governors were

no doubt an extremely worthy collection of people," Mr Kaufman told BBC Radio 4's *The World At One*.

"But in this cut-throat world of huge expansions in broadcasting, it is simply inappropriate for the BBC to go on being run by a part-time group of the great and the good."

The BBC said its governors were custodians of the licence payer's interest and not a Pic to no change was needed.

As well as professional directors, the report recommends that the Board of Governors should lose its right to regulate

the BBC on taste and decency matters. It wants an external regulator like the Independent Television Commission which oversees Channel 4 and ITV.

But the committee does not believe now is the time to move to a single regulator covering the BBC and the commercial sector. It wants a simpler body in ultimate control of the corporation.

The report also recommends that the BBC should be able to borrow from banks for expansion without the debt adding to the Public Sector Borrowing Requirement and thereby contributing to the Government's

deficit. "We believe it should be run as a business. But we want the public service nature of its activities to be safeguarded, and that is why we recommend the external regulator," said Mr Kaufman.

The report casts doubt on the long-term future of digital terrestrial broadcasting. In January, ITV broadcasters Carlton Communications and Granada linked up with Rupert Murdoch's BSkyB and the BBC to apply for three digital frequencies that could start broadcasting 30 channels into British homes from next year.

The report concludes that the digital system has will only last for a short period because of its inability to supply truly interactive TV services such as video-on-demand.

The committee also said the funding formula by which Channel 4 pays the ITV companies millions of pounds every year should be ended as soon as possible. But the MP's dismissed calls for Channel 4 to be privatised. "We are at a loss to understand why there is any consideration whatever of privatising Channel 4," the MPs said.

Union chief seeks special schools for unruly pupils

Lucy Ward
Education Correspondent

More than 100,000 pupils in mainstream schools are disruptive they should be removed and taught in special schools, the leader of the second largest teaching union said yesterday.

The call for a return towards segregated education, made by Nigel de Gruchy, general secretary of the National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers, flies in the face of almost 20 years of efforts to integrate children with special needs into ordinary schools.

The number of children with behavioural problems now staying in ordinary schools was the biggest single factor behind the dramatic rise in permanent exclusions from 2,500 to over 11,000 annually in the last four

years, Mr de Gruchy said. A report blaming integration for much of the increase in classroom disruption which could allow heads to get rid of poor teachers more easily. The present top salary for classroom teachers of £21,000 should be raised to £30,000, the union said.

Mr de Gruchy also challenged Mary Warnock, whose seminal 1978 report calling for children with special educational needs to be taught with their peers wherever possible formed the basis of the 1981 Education Act. Baroness Warnock should practise what she had preached, Mr de Gruchy said.

"It is so important to care for these youngsters why doesn't she give up her job in the House of Lords and go and teach these youngsters and show how it should be done?"

The NASUWT will also renew its calls for substantial salary rises for teachers who opt to stay in the classroom rather

than seeking promotion and cutting back on teaching, offering in return to accept tough appraisals which could allow heads to get rid of poor teachers more easily. The present top salary for classroom teachers of £21,000 should be raised to £30,000, the union said.

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Hospital's 'poor' cardiac surgery prompts inquiry

Annabel Ferriman

Stephen Dorrell, the Secretary of State for Health, announced an inquiry yesterday into cardiac surgery at Bristol Royal Infirmary after the publication of a report showing that one of the hospital's consultants had a "poor" surgical record.

An independent expert review which considered the treatment of 2,500 patients operated on during 1993-1995 condemned the record of James Wisheart as "significantly poorer" than that of his colleagues.

Mr Wisheart, retired early as medical director of the hospital in December, when he also stopped doing clinical work.

On Monday, the 59-year-old surgeon announced his retirement from the NHS. He and fellow surgeon Janardan

Daswana already face a separate General Medical Council investigation following an inquiry into the paediatric cardiac surgery at the hospital.

Last year, it was revealed that nine out of 13 babies died when undergoing "switch" operations and other surgical techniques to repair heart defects at the hospital between 1990 and 1995.

The failure rate was around two out of three, compared with a national average of one in 10.

A GMC spokesman said: "Our investigations into complaints about paediatric cardiac surgery at the Bristol Royal Infirmary are well advanced."

Mr Dorrell revealed, in answer to a question from Robert Key, MP for Salisbury, that the Department of Health inquiry would not start until the GMC investigation was over.

"I am mainly concerned about the response made at that time by the trust's management to these matters," he said.

"In the past two years, the trust has taken steps to improve the services, appointing a new paediatric cardiac surgeon and transferring services to new specialist facilities at the Bristol Children's Hospital."

"However, questions remain about the handling of these difficult issues," he said. "It is vital that the facts are ascertained; that any failures are identified and that lessons are learnt in Bristol and throughout the country to prevent similar situations in future."

The original inquiry into the deaths was carried out by Marc de Leval, consultant paediatric surgeon at Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital.

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RENAULT OWNER
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Springtime for Hockney as he paints the town with flowers



Flowers and spaces: Preparing yesterday for Hockney's show, which opens on 1 May at the Annely Juda Gallery in London. Photograph: Peter Macdiarmid

David Lister
Arts News Editor

For the art world, 1 May will have a significance beyond the general election. David Hockney is to give his first major British show of paintings for nearly a decade.

The exhibition "Flowers, Faces and Spaces", until 19 July at the Annely Juda Gallery in central London, will include a brand new series of more than 30 portraits and self-portraits and 18 still lifes never exhibited before. It will be his largest commercial gallery show. A number of the works will be for sale and are expected to fetch between £150,000 and £400,000, and it is likely to be one of the best-attended exhibitions of the year.

Annely Juda, who has been a friend of Hockney's since the Sixties, said yesterday that the flower still lifes were "a real departure for David".

Hockney, who lives in Los Angeles, says the new paintings of irises, sunflowers and violets bathed in Californian sunlight were greatly inspired by a visit he made to the Vermeer exhibition in The Hague last year. "What struck me was how vivid and strong the colour was in paintings that are 300 years old," he said. "I came back here and realised we've got a marvellous abundance of wonderful, strong light. I began to arrange daylighting in different ways ... I've painted flowers throughout my career, but I've never really done a whole series."

A 160-page catalogue documenting all the new paintings will accompany the exhibition.



Hockney: Inspired by Vermeer

Thatcher to join Churchill in archive

Baroness Thatcher's political and personal papers are to go on permanent loan to a Cambridge college. The former Tory prime minister said she was "delighted" that the records of her life and work would stay in Britain, and join those of an earlier premier, Winston Churchill.

Lady Thatcher announced yesterday that she would donate her papers to a new charity, the Margaret Thatcher Archive Trust, which would lend them permanently - "subject to certain conditions of care" - to Churchill College, Cambridge.

The "keeper" of the college's archives centre, Dr Piers Brendon, said the papers were "without doubt the most important archive of our times, following that of Sir Winston himself". The collection, which includes photographs, and audiovisual material, comprises more than 1,000 boxes of Lady Thatcher's political and personal papers from 1945 onwards. Most relate to her years as leader of the opposition and prime minister.

A spokesman for Lady

Thatcher's office said the work on setting up the charity was almost complete, but final arrangements were still being made for moving the archive.

Lady Thatcher said she hoped the papers would "be a valuable source for students and scholars who wish to study the great changes brought about by the Conservative governments that I had the privilege to lead".

The spokesman said papers related to her work as prime minister would be bound by the 30-year rule for government papers, so those from her first months in power in 1979 would not be available until 2010.

Churchill college, founded by Sir Winston 37 years ago, has 400 other collections of papers, including those of former Labour prime minister Clement Attlee and former leader Neil Kinnock, and senior Tories Lord Hailsham and Schwyn Lloyd. The master of the college, Sir John Boyd, said: "Lady Thatcher's initiative is a generous one; we welcome it and will take good care of these papers."

DAILY POEM

Spring

By Peter Dale

Yes, yes, we watched so many things die;
lamented the fresh green of the willow
and sundry roses under boughs or that sky -
and much else mourned into a pillow.

We knew full well it came to this.

So I offer you this nostalgia of grief,
and these sprigs of forsythia, not much amiss,
that blossom before they come to leaf.

"Spring", originally published in Peter Dale's collection *Too Much of Water*, appears in his recent volume of new and selected poems, *Edge to Edge* (Anvil Press, £9.95). Anvil also publishes his translation of Dante's *Divine Comedy*.

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election countdown

Campaign trail: Blair opts for low-key approach and shuns the big set pieces as Ashdown seeks to woo the women's vote

PM the challenger as leaders swap roles

Colin Brown
Chief Political Correspondent

John Major is approaching the campaign trail like the challenger against the prime ministerial Tony Blair. His opening trip to Luton on Monday showed that he is at home roughing it on the street.

One seasoned television presenter said: "Alistair Campbell has told Tony not to make eye contact with us. He stares straight ahead and says past. He's been told it's not prime ministerial to do doorsteps [off-the-cuff interviews]. Major does them all the time."

Mr Major knows he has to cause a stir. Mr Blair knows he has to avoid it. If he is to come from behind, a trip yesterday to the workshops of McLaren, the Formula One racing team, showed Mr Major that the place he should be cutting up rough is Tory headquarters in Smith Square.

The visit started promisingly enough. The theme this week is "British excellence", journalists were told on the breakfast coach to the McLaren plant in leafy Woking, Surrey. Mr Major would see the British-built McLaren car which won the Australian Grand Prix at the weekend with its British driver, David Coulthard. The trip was arranged at 48-hours' notice

with Ross Dennis, managing director of McLaren, a personal donor to Tory party funds, to show that the underdog can win. A winning racing car, fired up, and racing to go with its British driver at the wheel, would have been irresistible to the lunchtime television news.

In the event, the coffinsized car had been put up on two steel trestles in a high-tech maintenance bay. It had been stripped of its wheels, and there were red stickers saying "Sun" on the wing mirrors. The man from the Sun (back to Blair) was well-pleased.

McLaren may be world-beaters, but as a photo opportunity, the racing car without wheels was a dead duck, shot to pieces with metaphors. "The wheels have dropped off the wagon," said the man from the Sun.

As he left McLaren, Mr Major faced the cameras for a "door step", hurrying aside the Sun's endorsement for Tony Blair, and insisting like McLaren, that he will come from behind to win.

His words were nearly drowned out by a train on a line a few hundred yards away. It was operated by South West Trains, the company which has given the Government's privatisation programme a bad name by slashing services.

He will be back on the cam-



Blazing a trail: John Major and his wife, Norma (right), viewing an £800,000 McLaren GT car at the Formula One team's plant at Woking yesterday

Photograph: Brian Harris

paign trail today, visiting a school in the Midlands with assisted places to highlight Tory education policies. There will be more visits to factories run by Tory-supporting businessmen, to challenge Mr Blair's ability to woo the business vote. And

there will be set-piece rallies with Jeffrey Archer, the novelist, acting as the minder and warm-up act. Security surrounding a Tory election rally at the Royal Albert Hall in London on 4 April has been put on full alert for a possible IRA

attack after the date and location was published. The security risks surrounding Mr Major's tour were highlighted by the near riot in Luton on Monday, where he opened the campaign with a speech from his soap box.

The Major Battle Bus will be

stopping more often than it did in 1992 for street meetings in the Midlands, where Mr Major has been wooing the Asian vote. Basildon in Essex is on the list, as the scene of the turning point for the Tories on election night in 1992.

The key battleground will be

the Tory marginals, but this time, his strategists are taking the battle bus to Labour's heartlands, including Merseyside, to take the attack to Labour-controlled councils. It will be a grueling six-week campaign, and it risks turning off the voters.

It risks turning off the voters.

Labour plans party trick to present two Tony Blairs

Fran Abrams
Political Correspondent

Labour has a trick up its sleeve to keep the electorate keen over the next six weeks – not one Tony Blair, but two.

The first Mr Blair to appear at each election event will be a smiling, almost presidential figure who will be surrounded by cheering crowds wearing red roses and carrying swathes of red balloons.

But the glitzy, glamorous and even exciting man who is supposed to be created by these scenes will soon be replaced by a more serious character. The second Mr Blair will be found holding in-depth discussions with voters, giving keynote speeches to serious audiences and arguing the toss on policy issues with the unconvinced.

"Entice and convince" will be the key to the party's campaign. Mr Blair must be portrayed as a vibrant politician

whose presence sparks wild enthusiasm in every crowd, officials say, but he must not appear lightweight. Every shower of red roses must be backed up by a serious show of political weight.

Mr Blair's first election trip, to Gloucester on Monday, was a perfect example of the genre. Step one: as the party leader descends from his train, accompanied by his wife, Cherie, he is greeted by an enthusiastic demonstration and his aides have to clear a path from the platform to his car. Step two: Cherie sits in the back row as Mr Blair, accompanied by the local candidate, takes questions on everything from Europe to prescription charges.

Every scene will be carefully controlled by the party's spin doctors, and many will appear far more spontaneous than they really are. There will be more focus groups of the type seen in Gloucester, and there will also be town-centre walkabouts of

the sort John Major attempted in Luton. His wife will accompany him to many of the events, but will not be omnipresent during the campaign.

As for the big, set-piece rallies and speeches, these will certainly happen, but will be minutely planned in order to prevent a repetition of the triumphant Sheffield rally which was credited by some with losing Labour the last election.

There will be a big-city rally during the last week or so, and possibly another earlier in the campaign, though party spin doctors are not saying yet where or when they will be. We can confidently expect, though, that they will have a somewhat more serious, statesmanlike air than some past events. There will be rabbble-rousing speeches to the party faithful, of course, but these will be interspersed with many officials who may be wishing they had three, four or even five Tony Blairs.

Each party regional office has a detailed plan of which politicians will appear in which marginal seats on which days. But with a six-week campaign stretching resources there are many officials who may be wishing they had three, four or even five Tony Blairs.

While Mr Blair is busy with all this, the key figures in his campaign will be travelling the country, concentrating their efforts on about 100 target seats. This part of the election effort will be spearheaded by Labour's deputy leader, John Prescott, who has just embarked on a 10,000-mile round Britain tour. It will be backed up by every other member of Labour's frontbench team.

Leading women MPs will play a key part in the party's strategy meeting focus groups of floating female voters in marginal seats and also visiting businesses where many of the staff are women.

Each party regional office has a detailed plan of which politicians will appear in which marginal seats on which days. But with a six-week campaign stretching resources there are many officials who may be wishing they had three, four or even five Tony Blairs.

Williams), Emma Nicholson, former Tory and now Liberal Democrat MP for Devon West and Torridge and Diana Maddock, MP for Christchurch. Paddy Ashdown has been persuaded to offer female voters either the Conservative or the Labour leader.

As part of a "women-friendly" campaign, the Liberal Democrat leader will attempt to listen rather than assert and tell the truth rather than dissemble, his aides argue. Where John Major and Tony Blair will don the mantle of *gravitas*, Mr Ashdown will try for statesmanlike humility with the odd giggle thrown in.

He believes that the cock-fighting tactics of the other party leaders are a turn-off to voters in general, and to women in particular.

To reinforce the pitch for female votes, he will be enlisting high-profile help from Baroness Williams of Crosby (former Labour minister Shirley

His senior lieutenants also insist that the party will avoid "negative campaigning", although a press conference at their headquarters yesterday failed to resist the temptation.

"Labour is not offering a change, it is offering an echo," was one of the themes. In the words of Lord Holme, party campaign manager, Mr Major and Mr Blair are engaged in an exhibition of "synchronised swimming".

To those who contend that the proprietorship of a whelk staff may only be a distant ambition for the party, Mr Ashdown will point to the £15bn of public money for which they are responsible as the second largest party at local authority level. The general election coincides with voting in local elections.

And to those who dare suggest that the Liberal Democrats are basically Paddy Ashdown's party, they argue that he is more "team leader" than generalissimo.

Ashdown shuns machismo to catch the female vote

Barrie Clement

Paddy Ashdown has been persuaded to offer female voters either the Conservative or the Labour leader.

The Liberal Democrats might or might not believe it an advantage that the 56-year-old Mr Ashdown is due to become a grandfather for the first time during the hustings.

When the wheels of the Liberal Democrats' "battle bus" finally start turning on 7 April – it will no doubt become known as the Paddy Wagon – Mr Ashdown will want to be seen as a listener rather than a speechifier.

His campaign managers boast that he will meet far more electors than the other party leader. The Liberal Democrat high command is determined to avoid television footage of Mr Ashdown charging through shopping precincts preceded by spin doctors, scattering voters and leaflets in his wake.

Strategists are targeting the constituencies, particularly in the West Country where the Liberal Democrats have come a close second to the Tories.

Honesty will be the buzz word on the campaign trail. Honesty about increased taxes – the only credible way of improving education, the party argues. And honesty about Europe – the only party to be unashamedly Europhile.

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MPs offer a case for windfall tax

Chris Godsmark
Business Correspondent

An all-party Commons select committee yesterday provided valuable ammunition to Labour's plans for a windfall tax on the privatised utilities, with a report unanimously concluding that regulation had been too lenient in the years after the state sell-offs.

However, the rest of the report provided little support for the key Labour utilities policies. It conspicuously failed to back Labour's plans to back up individual regulators with boards of advisory directors, preferring to delay structural reforms until the completion of domestic competition in gas and electricity later next year.

Successive opinion polls have demonstrated that the Government has been hard pressed to get across the benefits of privatisation, while utility executives pay themselves huge salaries. However, the issue has also proved complex for New Labour. Mr O'Neill yesterday admitted that privatisation had "benefited" consumers, a statement which would have been hugely controversial before the last election, though he insisted much of the improvement had come from a worldwide plunge in energy prices.

Gordon Brown, the shadow Chancellor, immediately seized on the conclusions, which he claimed endorsed the case for the windfall tax. In a BBC interview, he added: "What the

report is about is whether the profits have been to high and the regulatory system too lax. And my whole case for the windfall tax is that the profits have been too high."

Though the tax itself was ostensibly beyond the committee's remit, Mr O'Neill told a news conference "there was evidence in the report to support the case for a windfall profits tax." He went on: "Profits were excessive and we all agree they were excessive."

John Butterfill, a Conservative committee member, swiftly disagreed, arguing that there would be "no point in having a regulator" if the tax went ahead. "The concept of

profits tax undermines the role of the regulator," he said. However, he also admitted that regulators had "underestimated the efficiency savings that could be achieved" from privatisation.

The Committee singled out the electricity sell-off for supplying up the biggest windfalls to investors, outweighing savings to customers. Figures showed shareholders in the 12 regional electricity companies, privatised in 1990 for £8bn, had earned total returns of about 40 per cent a year, well above the rise in the stock market as a whole. In contrast, prices for domestic customers dropped by just 15 per cent after inflation.

Business Comment, page 21

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Business Comment, page 21

significant shorts

Nationalists join fray with attack on Labour

The Scottish and Welsh nationalists got their election campaigns off the ground yesterday by launching an attack on Labour.

In the last joint news conference by Plaid Cymru and the Scottish National Party before the election, the two parties claimed they were the only ones to provide a radical alternative to the Tories. Alex Salmond, the SNP leader, said: "Blair has effectively cloned New Labour on a Tory model. In terms of economic and tax policy you could not put two more different parties together. So if they did have a television head-to-head debate I can only imagine it would be on the colour of the tie ... or the cut of the suit."

Hunting lobby pledges £1m

One of the biggest ever election lobbying campaigns in recent history is being conducted by the British Field Sports Society in the run up to 1 May.

Faced with the prospect of a massive Labour landslide, the group is prepared to spend up to £1m fighting an increasingly desperate battle to maintain the right to hunt. Labour has said it will give MPs a free vote on abolishing fox, deer and mink hunting if it came to power.

Train managers escape quiz

Managers from South West Trains, the troubled train line whose timetable cuts caused public fury, escaped appearing before a Commons select committee yesterday after Conservative MPs voted to cancel the meeting.

The transport select committee, chaired by a former Conservative minister, Paul Channon, decided to drop the sensitive hearings after Tory MPs voted against continuing the investigation. SWT's poor performance as the first British Rail company to be sold off to the private sector, in this case to Stagecoach, has ensured that the issue will be buried by the government.

London

Brown puts British Gas and BT firmly in his sights

Chris Godsmark
Business Correspondent

Labour yesterday gave the clearest indication yet that British Telecom would be caught in its planned windfall tax on the privatised utilities.

Facing repeated questioning about which companies would be hit by the tax, Gordon Brown, the shadow Chancellor, said it would affect "privatised companies that are licensed and regulated by statute." Experts said the definition was wider than any used so far by Labour, and would include BT, British Gas, the airports operator

to create jobs for the long-term unemployed. Mr Brown insisted the tax would work, adding: "we're utterly satisfied the three billion pound employment programme that we are proposing will be comfortably financed within the windfall levy." The party also announced it would appoint a minister for jobs working under the Secretary of State for Education.

Last night, one leading utility expert, Simon Flowers from the NatWest Bank's stockbroking arm, estimated that BT could have to pay at least £1bn to Treasury coffers after a post-election Labour budget, based on a £5bn programme

windfall tax. Mr Flowers said: "Increasingly since the turn of the year, the Labour Party has been suggesting the net would be spread fairly widely. That's why we've included British Gas and British Telecom in our calculations."

A BT spokesman yesterday brushed off the comments. "We have not been told that we have been included in the tax and we would be surprised if we were given that our profits are not excessive and the regulation of BT is anything but lax," he said.

BT, the group which runs Heathrow Airport, said it "welcomed"

the comments. "Gordon Brown stressed that the tax would only apply to the privatised utilities and BT is not a utility. It simply wouldn't make any sense to include BT," said a spokesman.

Some companies, including British Gas, BT and STC, will argue their share prices have not substantially outperformed the general trend in the stockmarket in recent years. A wider tax might be privately supported by the electricity and water companies, which could see their share of the levy halved from £300m to £150m, based on a £5bn total.

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London

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election countdown

Tony was there, obviously. Gordon was there. David Blunkett was present. Even Margaret Beckett had been allowed on to the platform of Labour's first election press conference (though she didn't say anything). But where was John Prescott, Labour's folk hero?

All we had (among our bundle of press releases) was an ominous bit of paper telling us that Prezza had – that morning – set out on a 10,000-mile round Britain election tour – the biggest tour by an individual politician in election history.

Tongues wagged as we waited for the event to begin. Was Prescott – like Gerald Kaufman in 1992 – being shunted out of the limelight, deemed too dangerous to leave at large in the capital?

Worse, the release went on to state that "the first leg of the tour will finish in Inverness in late April". The first leg? Late April? But the election is on 1 May, so did this mean that Prezza was to be kept in perpetual (but harmless) motion throughout the next Labour government, commencing visits to African and Central American capitals only when he had exhausted the constituencies of Britain? (Had interpreters all over the world been warned of the syntactical nightmare coming their way?)

But before the Prezza lovers among us had time to protest, a button was pressed and a giant screen in the centre of the white hacienda wall opened up.

We were transported to a scene out of *Songs of Praise*. Standing on a windy dock – the river Fal and the low hills of

Cornwall behind them – was a group of middle-aged happy clappies, gathered round their thick-set and avuncular pastor.

Any minute, at his gentle command, they'd break into a rendition of "All Things Bright and Beautiful", which we

at home could hum over our press releases.

"Hello John," said Tony fondly, and the thickset vicar smiled craggily and responded. "Hello Tony". It was, of course, John Prescott, embarked upon his tour. Gathered around him, he had a

group of "ordinary" Falmouthians – whose common hobby just happened to be catapulting Labour into power as soon as possible. Prezza was vicar no longer. But as he interviewed the locals live with an aplomb that would do justice to an insert into the National Lottery programme or the Eurovision Song Contest, he became a genuine, scowly-smiley TV star: a cross between *Antennae* Turner and *Les Dawson*.

Like the moment when he introduced a man in a chef's costume, who was sporting a gigantic pasty on a huge silver. It was, the chef told us, his contribution to the Labour Party. Our hearts were in our mouths: was it not possible that a Tory dirty tricks Tariquin had got to the man in white coat, and bribed him to give Prezza a pasty shampoo in front of the world's press?

But no. The happy clappies clapped happily, and Prezza did a short chatie friendly on local unemployment "in the 18 to 25 years", before introducing a man "who lives next door to Zeb Crie". But was nevertheless voting Labour.

Such folk – asked their opinion on camera – usually grant into the heads of their parkas. But not Seb's neighbour. With a practised turn to camera this chap recited off a list of emotional reasons why he wanted *Cod out and Labour in*, involving his children, his grand-children, his collie Petra, and the starving of the world. And all without a script.

With that, Prezza (now headed for Plymouth and Exeter) hopped back to Tony in the London studio. "My thanks, John!" said the Leader. "Cheerio, Tony!" said Prezza. It was a knockout.

Major's grammar scheme is ditched

Fran Abrams
Political Correspondent

John Major's plans to put a grammar school in every town have been ditched in order to allow the Government to push through its other legislation before the election.

Plans to allow new selective schools to be built and also to allow existing schools to select more pupils without special permission have been dropped. Clauses which would have enabled grant-maintained schools to expand at will have also been removed from the Bill.

Last night's announcement was made after detailed negotiations between the three main political parties on the future of all the Government's remaining legislation.

However, measures designed to improve school discipline and to give governing bodies new powers to exclude children were accepted by all sides.

Labour and the Liberal Democrats tried to stop measures which would expand the assisted-places scheme to primary schools.

However, ministers argued that about 150 pupils who expected to take up places under the scheme this September could be prevented from doing so if the clause was dropped, and it was finally agreed that it should stay in.

The agreement means that the rest of the Government's legislative programme will go through before Parliament breaks up for the Easter break on Friday.

As soon as MPs return on 8 April the house will be dissolved for the general election.

Some 28 Bills and at least nine pieces of backbench legislation are now expected to re-

ceive Royal Assent before the end of the week.

Debates are likely to continue into the night in order to meet the deadline, but measures such as the Police Bill, which legalises the hugging of private property, and the Crime Bill, which imposes minimum sentences on persistent offenders, will be passed. The Crime Bill was passed by peers last night despite opposition from Tory law lords.

Peers were also due to complete debate on the Local Government and Rating Bill, which allows reduced rates for small village shops, and a backbench measure on police health and safety.

Today they are to pass the Finance Bill, enacting the 1996 Budget, the Education Bill, the Crime and Punishment (Scotland) Bill, the Building Societies Bill, four minor government Bills, and five backbench Bills.

MPs will today complete debate on the Police Bill and the Government's anti-harassment Bill, among others.

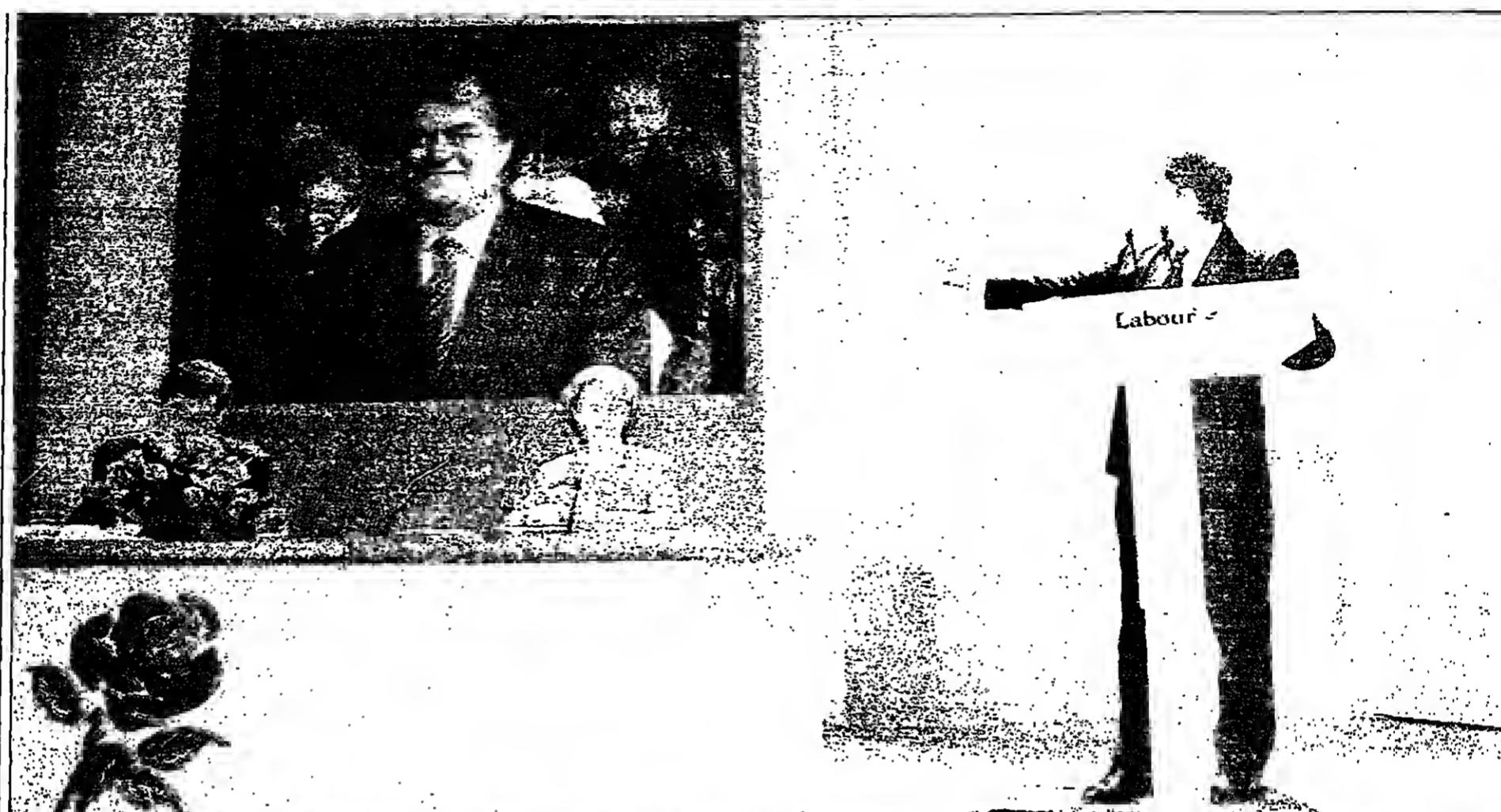
Tory Lord Archer's Succession to the Crown Bill will not survive this Parliament.

Lord Archer has agreed to withdraw his Bill, which was to have had its second reading on Friday.

A Labour source said later that the party had agreed with government proposals for a sensible way forward on the Education Bill: "We make no apology for refusing to accept those elements of the Bill with which we disagree.

"There is a basic difference between the two parties on the definition of parental choice.

"We believe in parents choosing schools for their children. The Tories believe that schools should choose the parents."



Larger than life: John Prescott being beamed in from his 10,000-mile round-Britain tour to join Labour's first election press conference yesterday. Photograph: David Rose

Election timetable saves cash-for-questions MP

Christian Wolmar
Westminster Correspondent

Neil Hamilton, the MP at the centre of the cash-for-questions scandal, acted in a way that was inappropriate to his proper role as an MP, according to the report into the affair by the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards, Sir Gordon Downey.

The report was due to be completed by next Tuesday but now cannot be published because Parliament prorogues on Friday.

A Labour source said later that the party had agreed with government proposals for a sensible way forward on the Education Bill: "We make no apology for refusing to accept those elements of the Bill with which we disagree.

"There is a basic difference between the two parties on the definition of parental choice.

"We believe in parents choosing schools for their children. The Tories believe that schools should choose the parents."

committee until after Parliament resumes.

Sir Gordon is thought to be angry that after working very hard for several months in order to meet the deadline of the election, publication is now being delayed.

The report, which is a wide investigation into the relationship between lobbyists and MPs, and into whether certain MPs accepted money to ask specific questions in the House, mentions around 30 MPs, but only five or six are the subject of severe criticism. While Mr Hamilton is said by Sir Gordon to have overstepped the mark most seriously, others whose behaviour is singled out include four other Tories: Sir Michael

Grylls, Michael Brown, Sir Andrew Bowden and Tim Smith. The MPs have all been shown the extracts in the report which relate to them. All except Sir Michael will now be standing in the election with a cloud hanging over them and the prospect of facing a Labour-dominated Standards and Privileges Committee which is likely to take a harder line on them than the current Tory-dominated body.

Simon Hughes, the Liberal Democrat MP for Bermondsey, suggested at Prime Minister's Question Time that John Major had deliberately prorogued Parliament early in order to ensure that the Downey report would not be published until

after the election. Mr Major who last year said he wanted the matter cleared up as quickly as possible, replied: "I have no knowledge of when it [the report] will be presented."

Mr Hughes said later: "Parliament is not being dissolved until 8 April, which is 19 days after prorogation. Prorogation and dissolution normally takes place on the same day, and in the three postwar elections when this did not take place, the biggest gap was 14 days.

"Mr Major has clearly done this on purpose to avoid the embarrassment of having this highly critical report published just before the election." The MP said.

PRIME MINISTER'S QUESTIONS

Tony Blair
5/10

John Major
6/10

Questions on health led to statistic swapping, as Blair must have known. Given this, he could have had more figures to throw at Major.

Major had had his fingers burned by Blair on health before. This time he was better briefed, contrasting on the Conservative pledge to increase investment, and peppered his replies with figures.

Blair's first statistic, "two thirds of health authorities and a third of hospital trusts are in deficit to the tune of £500m" was dismissed by Major as "blown out of all proportion". Only the Conservatives have pledged to increase funding, Major said, and it was about to rise by £1.6bn which would cover the deficit. Blair replied that it would not cover the deficit, and spoke of cancellation of non-emergency surgery, closure of Accident and Emergency departments, waiting lists and staff shortages, contrasting Major's "complacency" with "what people know is happening". He used a favourite health statistic, of "20,000 new managers and 50,000 fewer nurses". Major replied with yet more statistics and a new slogan: "They may have set up the Health Service but we have built it up".

* The timing of the prorogation of Parliament (Simon Hughes, L.D., South-West and Bermondsey)
* The success of the McLaren motor-racing team (Sir Cranley Ostlow, C. Woking)
* The low-status Shadow Cabinet (John Sykes, C, Scarborough and Ryedale)
* Major's self-by and use-by dates (Robert Wearing, Lab, Liverpool West Derby)

Simon Hughes (Islington N1) pointed specific NHS failings in London. Major replied that he was creating more "consultants, nurses... and, er, patients".
Betty Boothroyd (Brentwood and Ongar) remonstrated with Hughes who was struggling to hear above the din: "Spir it out, come on, there's no point in waiting for silence, the Hon. Gentleman is not going to get it."

Simon Hughes (Islington N1) asked what would my Fr. Friend do if all he had to choose from his Cabinet was a group of failed teachers, a group of ex-trade union officials, one TV director and a bar steward. Major, who once applied to become a bus conductor, avoided a direct answer.

Major told Hughes: "one of the reasons for making the announcement on Monday and straining for Parliament to be prorogued Friday was to give the Hon. Gentleman time to finish his question."

John Hume (West Belfast) asked what counts is not who is ahead at the first corner, but who has the steepest, steepest, the steepest and the nerve to see the race right through to the winning post?"

Compiled by Ben Summers

Ken Clarke ahead in the new-wave fashion stakes

Jojo Moyes

As the poll war began in earnest, one question preoccupied political commentators and voters. Not the health service, nor education, but Ken Clarke – Is He or Isn't He?

Because, as the 1970s so neatly put it, if it appeared the Chancellor of the Exchequer's new hairstyle, swept back from his forehead in a dashing brown crest, may have had a little chemical help.

His usual leave-it-where-it-falls hairstyle had become, according to one onlooker, "a cross between Michael Portillo



and Michael Heseltine". Under the lights of a news conference, it shone a deep shade of chestnut that looks likely to have

Ashdown takes a nutty approach to education

Anthony Bevins

Political Editor

The price of a packet of peanuts, contributed once a week by the average taxpayer, would make a dramatic improvement to education, Paddy Ashdown said yesterday.

Deploying the politicians' and media obsession with predictions, the Liberal Democrat leader told a campaign press conference: "What people want to hear is not predictions of an outcome that no one can predict, but what the parties stand for, how much will it cost and what will be the result."

Don Foster, the party's edu-

cation spokesman, said the Liberal Democrats would be pledging an extra £500m for the refurbishment of school buildings over the five-year lifetime of a Parliament, as part of its £2bn-a-year programme for education – and paid for by an extra penny in the pound on income tax. Mr Ashdown said that investment programme would cost the average taxpayer 45p a week.

"That's a packet of peanuts at a local pub," he said. "That's less than half a lottery ticket. But for that you really can do something to save teachers' jobs, to give kids in this country a chance of being in a class of 30 or no more by the end of the century, to give every child in this country pre-school education."

Mr Foster said his party's education investment programme would also deliver a "very significant hike" in the money spent on books and equipment in schools.

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election countdown

Sun readers left cold by decision to back Blair

Louise Jury

The *Sun* backed Blair and its readers besieged its telephone lines. Though there was a smattering of support for the switch of traditional allegiances yesterday, insiders said most of those calling in were from angry readers.

Dave Burgin, 28, an electrician from Essex, was puzzled by what he saw as the sudden *volte face*. "I was surprised, given what they have been saying for most of the last couple of years," he said.

A Tory voter last time, he said he intended to stay loyal to his party but not necessarily to his newspaper. "I don't know if I'll carry on reading the *Sun* if they go quite left," he said.

Clive Renno, 39, from Southampton – a colleague working with Mr Burgin on the refurbishment of a hotel in west London – also backed

the Tories last time but would be supporting no one this. "There are too many immigrants in this country and none of the parties do anything about it."

Whatever the *Sun* said would make no difference. "I don't believe most of what's in the papers anyway," he said. "But I'm surprised. They've always supported the Tory party before and they just suddenly changed."

Among the others working on the hotel refurbishment, most claimed not to read the politics at all – just the sport, the crossword, the cartoons, and even the agony aunt. Yesterday's picture of a female Newcastle United fan in a bikini emblazoned "Ginola" was also a hit.

"But I don't read anything about Labour or Conservative," said the man serving the fried breakfasts.

Martin Giles, 35, a plumber, said he was surprised at the backing for Blair, but it would

make no difference to him. "I'd have voted Labour anyway. So close to the election, I don't think it will make a difference."

Many were suspicious of its motives. Paul Dimond, 32, from Wales, said the switch in political allegiance was "two-faced as hell. Murdoch's a businessman, he's there to make money."

Martin Ord, 23, from Newcastle, said the minimum wage, not any editorial, would swing his vote. Builders fear a minimum wage will force their salaries down. So contrary to popular opinion, it really could be policies not presentation and polemic which decides the election result.

Simon Wilson, 29, the site manager from Leeds, said: "It's in the back of our mind that if Labour come in, we might get a fair crack – the Conservatives have killed the building industry. But more fool them if anybody takes notice of the *Sun*."

Reading room: Dave Burgin (left) and Clive Renno (centre) taking a break from work yesterday

Photograph: John Voos



BBC and ITV vie to host leaders' debate

Paul McCann
Media Correspondent

The three main party leaders agreed yesterday to appear on separate editions of BBC1's *Question Time* programme to take questions from the audience while ITV and the BBC stepped up the fight to host a televised head-to-head debate between Tony Blair and John Major.

The two channels dispatched detailed proposals to the three main parties yesterday as Channel 4 and BBC2 revealed that they had both signed up the three contenders for Chancellor of the Exchequer: Chancellor Kenneth Clarke will join Labour's Gordon Brown and the Liberal Democrats' Malcolm Bruce in *Power and the People*, a television discussion on Channel 4 on 27 April. The three have agreed to be questioned on the economy by an audience of 300 selected to represent the British public.

The audience will be given impartial political briefings before being allowed to cross-examine in turn the candidates, and will be quizzed on their voting intentions before and after the politicians' answers.

After Easter, Peter Jay, the BBC's economics editor, will present a debate for BBC2's *The Money Programme* on 6 April which will also put Mr Clarke, Mr Brown and Mr Bruce head to head.

ITV sent detailed proposals to the parties for a televised debate between their leaders yesterday and insisted that it was still in the running to host the debate. It is understood to be proposing having Mr Major and Mr Blair debating head to head because he has little chance of getting to Downing Street.

head, followed immediately by a contribution from Liberal Democrat leader Paddy Ashdown.

However, the BBC has emerged as frontrunner by proposing three separate debates: Major-Ashdown, Blair-Ashdown and Major-Blair, which Liberal Democrat sources say they will accept.

The BBC also announced that the three leaders would ap-



Jay: Economic debate host

pear separately on a series of *Question Time* specials hosted by David Dimbleby from 3 April and take questions from the audience. The Scottish and Welsh nationalist party leaders would appear together in a separate programme.

Mr Ashdown said yesterday that 80 per cent of people wanted him to take part in a three-way contest with Mr Blair and Mr Major. He told GMTV it was "arrogant" for the Prime Minister or Brian Mawhinney, the Tory party chairman, to decide who would be included in the debate.

The Tories have suggested that Mr Ashdown should not take part because he has little chance of getting to Downing Street.

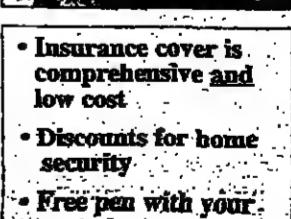
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Mubarak
apeact

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Bulldozers blast trail for new settlement

Israel uses army to ensure that no Palestinians protest near construction site

Patrick Cockburn
Har Homa

At 3pm, the yellow bulldozer started scraping away earth and rock on the northern flank of Har Homa, the pine-covered hill where the Israeli government is building a Jewish settlement to secure its control over Jerusalem.

The government had given the impression that it would start gently, by sending in teams of surveyors.

Instead four bulldozers, surrounded by soldiers and police, with a military helicopter clattering overhead, started cutting an access road through the brown earth beside the football field of the Palestinian village of Zur Bahar.

In a few weeks, Israeli contractors will have stripped Har Homa, known to Palestinians as Jabel Abu Jhimein, of its trees, which make the hill look like a long, green island stretching between Jerusalem and Bethlehem. When the building project is complete, Har Homa will become home to some 27,000 Jews in 6,500 apartments, isolating Palestinian districts in Jerusalem from those outside.

A mile away, and out of sight of where Israeli bulldozers were starting to work on the northern end of Har Homa, Faisal Husseini, the Palestinian leader in Jerusalem, had es-



tablished a small camp of six tents beside a half-built house on a neighbouring hill from which he was orchestrating protests.

"We are trying to say to Israel that the peace process is dying," he told a crowd of reporters and supporters who had clambered up the hillside through driving rain to stand

outside his tent.

Israel had originally said it wanted Mr Husseini off the hill by morning and if he did not go its forces would remove him. But, perhaps reflecting that such a confrontation, conducted before a dozen television cameras, could only benefit Mr Husseini, the dozen Israeli

troops near his tent, huddled in a house to keep out of the rain, made no effort to dislodge him. Nevertheless, Mr Husseini said: "They are pushing us from being officials and negotiators to becoming [political] activists."

Overnight, Yasser Arafat, the Palestinian leader, had refused to meet Benjamin Ne-

tanyahu, the Israeli leader, to discuss concessions to the Palestinians, such as opening of a port and airport at Gaza, as a *quid pro quo* for the building of the settlement at Har Homa.

"No trade," said Abu Alaa, a chief Palestinian negotiator, who had joined Mr Husseini in his tent. He said the concessions

Israel was now offering it had already agreed to make as part of the interim peace agreement signed in 1995. Salah al-Taamari, the most important political leader in Bethlehem, said it would be difficult for Mr Arafat to meet Mr Netanyahu now, because he was "so arrogant, so rude, so racist".

Despite the verbal clashes, both Israelis and Palestinians are being restrained on the ground. Although there were reports of Israeli troops marching around Har Homa yesterday morning, they were difficult to find on the ground. Close to the most likely confrontation point there were only about 200 sol-

ders. As night fell, Palestinian boys from the nearby Christian town of Beit Sahour started throwing stones at Israeli troops on the road to Har Homa but the soldiers did not respond.

The ground-breaking by the Israeli bulldozers was out of sight of the Palestinian towns to the south. Three Israeli Arabs trying to demonstrate were hit by rifle butts, but otherwise there was little violence.

Reasons for this restraint include the rain and the belief that confrontation over Har Homa will go on for a long time. But the biggest motive is that both sides are conscious the world is watching. Palestinians feel that Israel is isolated as never before. They think that if Palestinians were seen to start violence then they might forfeit international sympathy.

Mr Netanyahu yesterday evening accused Mr Arafat of aiding potential bombers by releasing a senior Hamas leader, Mr Arafat, for his part, has ordered Palestinian hospitals to get beds ready, though he probably wants to squeeze the maximum political advantage out of the crisis over Har Homa without provoking a confrontation which he would be unable to control.

At the same time there are so many points of friction between Israelis and Palestinians on the West Bank that as the political temperature rises it will probably be impossible to avoid a clash leading to heavy casualties.

Mubarak's gadfly prophesies a peaceful Islamic revolution



Robert Fisk meets the editor whose literary barbs have outraged Egypt's president

Cairo — Magdi Hussein is not a happy man. As an Islamist newspaper editor, he has already paid a fine for allegedly slandering Hassan Alib, the Egyptian Interior Minister, and now faces further charges of libel for reporting on the business activities of Mr Alib and his family. Ten Egyptian police generally claim, have now set up a construction company together, a "disgraceful act" according to the gadfly editor of the twice-weekly *Al Shaaib*, while the courts insist that enquiries into the commercial affairs of a minister are an invasion of privacy.

Mr Hussein, bearded, be-spectacled but smiling broadly, sits in the office of his cramped apartment in a black robe, family photographs on the walls, the word Allah written in Arabic script in front of the library.

President Hosni Mubarak, they say, personally loathes the diminutive editor and Mr Hussein clearly doesn't object to the rumour. He sees Egypt as ever more deeply wounded by its involvement in the Arab-Israeli peace process, ever more in hock to a United States whose policies it must obey, ever more socially divided between the rich who prosper on the country's improving balance of payments and the army of poor who find life more expensive and more intolerable by the week.

And there are times when Egypt seems to fit Mr Hussein's description. The suburbs and villages around Cairo are places of unutterable squalor, a fearful companion with the glitzy hotels, nightclubs and island apartments in the centre of the city, while America's grip appears to grow tighter.

Why, only last month, the FBI director, Louis Freeh, opened an investigative office in downtown Cairo "to exchange information" according to Mr Alib, "and to co-operate with the Egyptian authorities in all aspects of security ... some crimes require more action, co-operation and exchange of information between international

security services." Mr Freeh had just opened an identical office in Tel Aviv. It was part of an expansion in the words of the United States embassy in Cairo, "in US anti-terror ... responsibilities".

Mr Hussein notes that international security co-operation moves laterally across the Arab world, and that Algeria and Tunisia are now using identical torture techniques to those employed by security police in Egypt. "The experience of investigating and interrogating suspects is being shared by the Egyptians," he says. "In Tunisia they even call the different tortures by the same names as the Egyptians — by the names of popular Egyptian singers, like Abd Al-Hamid Hafez and Shadia.

They are exchanging experiences between themselves, exchanging information about people, about those men who fought in Afghanistan. They are filling in spaces in each other's information."

Mr Mubarak's least favourite editor has equally little time for his country's relations with



Mubarak: Under his rule, US grip grows ever tighter

Israel. "Nobody has any confidence in Israel. People here are angry about Jerusalem, about what happened in Qana. But they are desperate people. There is no way they can fight Israel — Israel is our destiny. The Israelis are going to implement their project, however much we protest. We shout, and they work on the ground. They are not angry about us as long as we go on shouting. I'll give you an example: commerce between Egypt and Israel increased by 135 per cent in the first nine months of 1996, and half of this time Israel was run by [Benjamin] Netanyahu. The Israelis don't think it's important, if Egyptian journalists write against them."

Mr Hussein still envisages an Islamic revolution in Egypt "in 10 or 20 years". He bursts into laughter when my eyebrows rise in astonishment. But he insists Egypt's revolution will be a peaceful one. Algeria is not his role model. "In Algeria, Islamists had already taken over local authorities and were about to win national elections when they were crushed. The Algerians are more severe and tougher than the Egyptians. They are a mountain people — we are a people of the plain. The Algerians use the mountains to hide in, they have forests in which they can shelter. Here, we have no shelters. Here, our mountains are far from cities — in Algeria, the mountains are close to the cities. Bosnia and Afghanistan are geographically similar to the mountains of Algeria. You need mountains and woods to have a guerrilla war. That's why such a war is difficult in Palestine. I believe geography is very important in political analysis."

So, presumably, does Mr Mubarak, whose security police have set up their scruffy checkpoints on the Nile roads south of Cairo, isolating each town and city from each other whenever the mood takes them.

The President, it seems, has understood the advantage of having a flat country.

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significant shorts

Chinese party leader thwarts rival's challenge

China's Communist Party chief, Jiang Zemin, has barred his predecessor, Zhao Ziyang, from returning to Peking from the provinces, fearing a challenge to his grip on power. Chinese sources said: 'The reformist Mr Zhao was toppled as party chief in 1989, when the army crushed a pro-democracy movement. The news seems to indicate a rise in factional tension in China.' Reuters - Peking

CNN beams from Havana

The CNN television network launched broadcasts from its new bureau in Havana, the first time in 28 years a US media outlet has worked from a permanent bureau on the island. Reuters - Havana

Cairo's act of faith

The Egyptian antiquities department announced it was looking for a contractor to restore one of Egypt's oldest Coptic churches, the Hanging Church in Old Cairo. The church, which is probably 1,300 years old, had suffered structural problems for years. Reuters - Cairo

EU in 'mid-life' crisis

The European Union is approaching a 'mid-life crisis' and must engage in self-reflection to find its new purpose. President Mary Robinson of Ireland said: 'She said the EU - marking its 40th anniversary this year - must pause and reflect as it enters "the most crucial and challenging phase in its development".' AP - Utrecht

Miss Universe figures it out

Irene Saez, a former Miss Universe, is preparing to announce a bid for president of Venezuela next year. 'I know the moment will come to ... take a firm decision,' she said. She was Miss Universe in 1981 and is now mayor of the district of Chacao in Caracas. Reuters - Caracas

Top brass set for the boot

Igor Rodionov, Russia's Defence Minister, indicated that the dismissal of several top commanders was imminent. He also said airborne forces would be made subordinate to the ground forces. AP - Moscow

UN role for James Baker

The former US secretary of state James Baker was named as envoy of the UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, for Western Sahara, whose future has been in contention since Spain withdrew in 1976. Reuters - New York

Man dies in stamp stampede

A man died in a stampede to buy the last Hong Kong stamps featuring the Queen's head, which is no longer printed on stamps in the colony. Those carrying it will cease to be valid on 1 July, when the territory is handed back to China. Reuters - Hong Kong



German soldiers attack youths in racist rampage

Spectre of pogrom returns to embarrass army

Imre Karacs
Bonn

The German army's long march to international respectability suffered a reverse in the small town of Detmold on Monday night, as 10 of its soldiers marked out for peace-keeping duty staged a mini-pogrom.

Shouting 'Wogs out of Germany', the uniformed conscripts in combat helmets rampaged through the centre in search of foreigners, attacking a 16-year-old Italian boy and two Turkish youths with baseball bats, knives and spades.

All 10 were soldiers of the 3rd Panzer Battalion, stationed at a barracks named after Field Marshal Erwin Rommel. They had completed two months of training in the Bundeswehr (army), and were about to be transferred to Bosnia. They were to help foreigners, said Major Uwe Hindrichs, the battalion's deputy commander. The guilty 10, he assured the public, were now off the Bosnia list.

The perpetrators were aged 20, most had come to the west German base from the east, and there appeared to be no doubt of their racist intentions. After a heavy night's drinking, they set off from their last watering hole at about half-past nine, hunting for 'Kanacken' - the derogatory term for Turks.

The Italian was the first to stumble into their way. They beat him up, threatened to slit his throat and left him lying on the pavement. 'Where are the wogs?' they asked passers-by. The two Turks, aged 16 and 17 respectively, appeared to fit the bill, and were duly kicked



senseless. The lads themselves sustained no injuries.

It was only a few days ago that German troops were hailed for their gallantry and newly found self-confidence. They were the heroes of last Friday's chaotic evacuation of Westerners from Albania, at one point exchanging fire with local thugs.

Now Germans are wondering whether the lessons in assertiveness might have gone a bit too far. A spokesman from the Rommel barracks stressed yesterday that the conscripts had also been lectured on how to deal with foreigners, but the subject of neo-Nazism was not on the 'political studies' syllabus.

The top brass, who in a report

issued last week found no evidence of organised right-wing extremism in the Bundeswehr,

were quick to apologise for the attack. 'We express our regret

The media focuses on Volker Rühe, Germany's Defence Minister, during a Cabinet meeting in Bonn yesterday after the attack by soldiers on foreigners in Detmold. Photograph: Reuters

to our foreign citizens for the soldiers' shameful actions,' said Volker Rühe, the Defence Minister, and the army's chief of staff, General Hartmut Bagger.

In a joint statement, they vowed to pursue 'all possible legal and disciplinary measures' against the Detmold 10, one of whom was still on the run last night.

No links to extremist organisations have so far been uncovered, though police are aware that the neo-Nazis have a centre near Detmold. The army keeps a close watch on extremists within its ranks. According to the latest annual report, 56 soldiers - including 11 NCOs and one lieutenant - were convicted last year of racism. A 22-year-old former soldier is due to go on trial next month for the attempted murder of an Italian, an attack allegedly motivated by xenophobia.

Zaire's new lion king snaps at the heels of ailing president

Ed O'Loughlin
Goma

Zairean rebel leader Laurent Kabila may not have won his war, yet, but he has already had his victory parade.

Goma came to a standstill yesterday as thousands of people crammed into town to watch the rebels celebrate the week-end capture of Kisangani, a strategic victory that could finish off the ailing President

Mobutu Sese Seko once and for all.

For Mr Kabila, veteran of three decades of anti-Mobutu struggle, the occasion was a personal and symbolic triumph.

The parade was led by officials of the rebel Ministry of Information, Press and Propaganda, each wrapped in the seven-starred flag of the short-lived Congo Republic.

In the territory he controls - at least a sixth of the country -

Mr Kabila has already reinstated the post-colonial name and flag which he failed to defend against the Mobutist coup of 1965.

Another symbol of the rebel government has puzzled foreign observers. Their new official seal, stamped on all government documents, features a lion's snarling head.

On closer inspection, this turns out to be the lion character from Disney's film *The Lion King*. Nobody has yet plucked up the courage to ask the rebels what this means.

Yesterday, wearing a stetson and a broad smile, eastern Zaire's new lion king faced his people from a plush armchair, listening to their cheers. Behind him his entourage of officials and soldiers jammed onto a large concrete podium specially constructed for such occasions when Mr Mobutu was still in charge of these parts.

For while the symbols and faces were different, veteran Zaire-watchers noted that the style was eerily the same. A tin roof sheltered the dignitaries from the tropical downpour which broke out shortly after the ceremony kicked off, almost two hours late. The townpeople stood huddled in the rain.

Rebel soldiers divided their time between whipping the crowd into line with sticks and gloating at the musicians and the people in the parade. One Kalashnikov-toting soldier, who could not have been more than 10 years old, was whisked away when too many foreign cameras lenses swung towards him.

The rebels believe the peoples of old Zaire are swaying to their side. 'In Kinshasa people are happy,' Mr Kabila told the cheering crowd. 'But people like Molintu and his family are already packing their bags.'

And, even after years of pillage, misrule and conflict, there was optimism in the air.

Prime Minister loses his place

Leoni Kengo Wa Dondo, the Zairean Prime Minister, was removed from office yesterday, a spokesman for the country's parliament said. The unpopular leader was toppled only hours after he left for Nairobi, Kenya, to attend an international meeting on civil war in Zaire. There had been many rumours earlier in the day that he would be prevented from leaving the country to represent Zaire at the summit.

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international

Finns shun prospect of security in larger Nato

Tony Barber
Helsinki

The Finnish government is sticking to its policy of not joining Nato despite the prospect that most European security issues could soon be decided by an enlarged alliance in concert with Russia.

"Finland is not the focus of threats, for the prevention or repulsion of which security guarantees from a military alliance would be necessary. Finland's non-participation in military alliances supports stability in northern Europe," said a government report on defence issued this week.

Despite this firm statement, some Finnish experts say Finland may have to reconsider. Since Nato is preparing to embrace several former Communists in Eastern Europe, and is seeking a special security relationship with Russia, Finland could be in danger of losing influence over matters directly affecting its security, they say.

"The emergence of an enlarged Nato with a wider mandate to deal with European security problems, and with a co-operative relationship with Russia, would constitute a new European security order," said Max Jakobson, a former Finnish ambassador to the United Nations. "To remain outside of Nato is to be without a seat at the table where the decisions on European security will be made."

Finland's neutrality after the Second World War was based on a delicate formula which combined Western-style freedom at home with a scrupulous care not to annoy the Soviet Union. The policy was a success in that Soviet Communism ultimately collapsed and Finland became free of its old constraints. But the Cold War years remain a sensitive subject, and many Finns are bitterly critical of the self-censorship of those times.

As a member of the EU since 1995 and of Nato's Partnership for Peace programme, Finland has already drifted away from the old, post-war policy of absolute neutrality. EU membership is more popular in Finland than in neighbouring Sweden partly because, as the government report observes, it "strengthens Finland's security position".

That sense of security could diminish if Nato's enlargement goes wrong and Russian-Western relations deteriorate. "Finland is striving to ensure that neither Nato enlargement nor whatever treaty arrangement the alliance arrives at with Russia leads to the emergence of lines of division or spheres of interest that would detract from stability in northern Europe," the government report says. There is particular concern for the Baltic states, above all Estonia, to which Finns feel closest.



Face to face: A pedestrian in Helsinki passing a poster of Bill Clinton and Boris Yeltsin; the two leaders are to meet for a two-day summit in the Finnish capital tomorrow

Photograph: Reuter

Clinton's CIA nominee gives up in disgust

Rupert Cormwell
Washington

The surprise withdrawal of Anthony Lake, nominee to head the Central Intelligence Agency, is a large embarrassment for President Bill Clinton, another body-blow for the demoralised CIA, but above all proof of how the campaign fund-raising row has bred a bitter partisanship that is poisoning politics and government.

On Monday the patience of the mild Mr Lake, for four years Mr Clinton's National Security Adviser, snapped with what he called a "political circus". Having refused every presidential entreaty to stick out his ordeal, he delivered a resignation letter declaring Washington "had gone haywire" and damning a system that "was nasty, brutal, but anything but short".

The White House said the grilling Mr Lake was subjected to before the Senate Intelligence Committee proved only that the confirmation process was "inexcusably flawed".

But Richard Shelby, the Democrat-turned-Republican who chairs the committee, and led the inquiry, was unrepentant. The vetting process "should be rigorous," he said, and Mr Lake had not passed muster.

Few expected Mr Lake to throw in the towel now, after having put up with so much. Despite the sniping, he had majority support in the committee and almost certainly in the full Senate thereafter.

But new obstacles, notably press reports alleging the Democratic National Committee improperly lobbied the National Security Council and the CIA for favourable treatment for a Lebanese-American campaign donor, were threatening further delay, and Mr Lake decided he had been hung out to dry long enough.

Thus becomes the latest



Lake: snapped with what he called the 'political circus'

Former adviser condemns Washington for 'going haywire'

As a solid in-house choice, he could expect relatively speedy confirmation and for agency employees he would be a better-known quantity than other mooted candidates like Jamie Gorelick, deputy attorney-general in the first Clinton administration, the former Georgia senator Sam Nunn, and Richard Holbrooke, architect of the Bosnia peace accords.

None however has Mr Lake's

access and long intimacy with the President. And whoever

survives ordeal by Senator Shie

ly will have the dubious distinc

tion of being the CIA's fifth

director in six years, a list which

does not include two nominees

who withdrew their nomi

nination. The job turnover is a

measure of the disarray of an

agency celebrated not for its

quiet successes, but for front

page failures like the Ames esp

ionage case.

But it has also long been clear

the Republicans were deter

mined to claim at least one scalp

among Mr Clinton's second

term nominees, if only to prove

they were masters on Capitol

Hill and avenge themselves for

past Republican nominees shot

down by a Democratic Con

gress. And once the campaign

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KGB's fight to counter the cunning chaps in smart suits

Moscow - During the Cold War, agents at the KGB school at Balashikha, outside Moscow, were taught that the CIA was the *glavny protivnik*, or main enemy. But they were told to pay special attention to the British, for they had a reputation as the most subtle spies.

Even today Russians love to hate the pinstripe-suited, two-faced Briton as much if not more than the loud American. During last year's presidential election, the nationalist politician Vladimir Zhirinovsky told Russians to be on the alert for foreign spies of all nationalities but in particular to be cautious of the perfidious Brits.

"The Russian stereotype of the British is that they are cunning and hypocritical," said Mikhail Lyubimov, head of the British section at KGB headquarters after being expelled from London in 1965. The KGB's warning of the Secret Intelligence Service, MI6, was based on more than prejudice. SIS, founded in 1909, was older than Soviet intelligence or the CIA and therefore perceived to have the advantage of experience. Also, Britain had a long history of rivalry with Russia.

"Britain was afraid of tsarist Russian influence in India and Afghanistan. We saw you as being not only anti-Soviet but Russophobic well before the Bolshevik Revolution," Col



In the latest of our series, a former spymaster tells Helen Womack that old espionage habits die hard

Lyubimov said over a cup of tea in his Moscow flat. In 1917 Britain was still the *glavny protivnik*, as the CIA had not been formed. "Britain did all in its power to help those who opposed the Bolsheviks," said Col Lyubimov, now a writer. But by

Lyubimov, Burgess, Maclean, Cairncross and Blunt, were recruited. But they were just the tip of the iceberg. "I can't name many names but there were many more," he said. How many? "We're talking in the tens."

During the Second World

War, the Allies were supposed to stop spying on each other and pool their efforts. But Stalin, who had made a secret pact with Germany in 1939, suspected the British were not sincere. This was partly because Kim Philby was giving Moscow full reports

of what the British knew as a result of having cracked the Germans' Enigma code, which enabled Stalin to see Churchill was not sharing all his information with him.

In an atmosphere of mistrust, war turned into cold war, the main source of friction after 1945 being the future of East Europe. Col Lyubimov said the Russians were impressed by the British performance in the struggle for influence over this region. But they were fighting a losing battle and many SIS agents were caught, in part thanks to Philby. For example, 16 Polish generals accused of spying for Britain on Soviet territory were executed, and a British spy called Felix Rumple was arrested in Latvia. "As you British say, 'It is not the winning

that counts but playing the game,'" chuckled the colonel.

With the defection of Guy Burgess and Donald Maclean in 1951, SIS entered a long period of crisis as it searched for the Third Man, Philby, who fled to Moscow in 1963. Before that, he had been MI6's representative at Langley, Virginia, which meant the British lost much credibility with the increasingly powerful CIA. Moscow now paid more attention to the activities of the Americans.

Col Lyubimov thinks the traitor who did most damage to the Soviet Union was the military intelligence officer Oleg Penkovsky, who passed secrets to the British businessman Greville Wynne. Thanks to Penkovsky, the West realised Khrushchev was bluffing during

the Cuban missile crisis of 1962. Penkovsky was executed; Wynne, who was sentenced to eight years in prison, was later swapped for the Soviet spy Gordon Lonsdale.

Recruiting agents on Soviet soil was difficult for the British,

Russians believe they intercepted all their citizens who approached or were approached by the British in Moscow.

Which is why SIS preferred to recruit Russians in London or third countries. Their most famous catch of recent years was

the former London KGB resident Oleg Gordievsky, who began betraying his country in the 1970s, when he worked at the Soviet embassy in Copenhagen. Found out in 1985, he made a dramatic escape to Britain from Moscow hidden, it is widely

Patriotism and perfidy: Some of the personalities, real and fictional, who inhabited the dark world of espionage: Maclean (left), Philby, Bond, Wynne and Burgess

Photomontage: Jonathan Anstee

ly believed, in a diplomatic removal van.

The SIS also recruited Ivan Kuzichkin in Iran and Viktor Suvorov in Geneva. Mr Kuzichkin provided information on Moscow's relations with the illegal Iranian Communist Party, while Mr Suvorov revealed military secrets, including details of the operations of the Spetsnaz special forces.

The Cold War is over but last year a tit-for-tat expulsion incident between Moscow and London caused a brief icy blast from the past. Four Russian diplomats were ordered out of Britain after the same number of British diplomats were expelled from Moscow for having contacts with a young Russian called Platon Obukhov. Mr Obukhov, now awaiting trial for treason, claims that he was gathering material for the latest of the popular spy novels which he writes.

Some observers suggested President Boris Yeltsin needed a dispute with Britain, normally seen as a friendly country, to look tough before the presidential elections.

But Col Lyubimov dismissed this theory, saying there was never smoke without fire: he was sure the British diplomats had been up to something.

"They failed and I can only sympathise with them," said the KGB veteran who, in 1965, was set up by two men "smelling of fish" in a London pub and declared *persona non grata* in the country he regards as his second home.

Col Lyubimov said the Obukhov case had contributed to a new Russian suspicion about the British in the era after the Cold War. "Now again, after the euphoria of the post-Communist period, when we thought we could co-operate, mistrust has returned. I personally don't see a threat but our secret services still think in terms of perfidious Albion. It will take centuries for the cliché to die."



6 Philby and Burgess ... the tip of the iceberg

the 1930s Soviet intelligence was starting to turn the tables. "There was a strong anti-fascist mood across Europe and people wanted to help us fight Hitler," said Col Lyubimov. This was when the "Magnificent Five", as the Russians call Philby

and Burgess, Maclean, Cairncross and Blunt, were recruited. But they were just the tip of the iceberg. "I can't name many names but there were many more," he said. How many? "We're talking in the tens."

During the Second World

6 Russians love to hate the two-faced Briton

Col Lyubimov, "KGB surveillance was extremely strong. Back-up staff at embassies were all from the Russian service to diplomats, which automatically reported to the KGB. Rooms and telephones were bugged. Unless they are mistaken, the

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DRIVEN BY PASSION

Danger: Israeli colonialism at work

Appropriately, it rained. Eretz Israel arrived yesterday at the foot of Jabal Abu Ghneim - Har Homa to its military landlords - with armour, helicopters and an honour guard for the bulldozers. Some honour: this building work is an act of colonialism by the Israeli government, timed to pay off the political debts of the prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu. These flats do not need to be built. They do not need to be built on a Palestinian hillside. And they do not need to be built now.

If there is no violent outbreak this week, that will be a blessing, for the prospect for Middle East peace (defined minimally as the absence of bloodshed) is bleaker than for some time. It is indeed time for the friends of Israel to clarify the extent and the nature of our friendship. We say: for the existence of the Israeli state within secure boundaries and with a right to defend itself internally and externally against terrorism - yes. But for a policy of tinfoil imperialism, contemptuous of legal process and blinkered in its refusal to see that the Palestinian national entity exists and will have to be recognised - no.

The more earth is moved and concrete laid, the greater the puzzle grows over the Netanyahu government's longer-term intentions. Evidently, he has no use for Yasser Arafat and the prospect of a Palestinian state that he embodies. Some

of Netanyahu's coalition henchmen talk openly about assassinating the Palestinian leader. But what sort of calculation can lie behind that threat?

Construction work at Har Homa is only going ahead because Arafat is weak. He has no leverage over the Israeli government, but few other buttons to push. He is capable of inciting insurrection, but mayhem on the streets could be dangerous to his position and the rule of the Palestinian Authority. The Israeli government, at one and the same time, wants to hold Arafat responsible while denying him the supports that would make his responsibility operational. Does Netanyahu have some alternative Palestinian leader up his sleeve? Does he really think that anarchy - which would surely follow Arafat's disappearance - is going to make colonial government any easier?

Or does he, perhaps, have some unannounced model in which the Palestinians simply disappear? The saga of Jerusalem's municipal boundaries - to be chopped, changed and gerrymandered at whim - has lately shown how unwelcome the Netanyahu coalition finds the idea of assimilation. Too often it seems as if he and his even less attractive coalition partners dream of the West Bank, even those densely populated Arab suburbs of Old Jerusalem, as *terra nullius*, their inhabitants a tribe of ghosts to be wished away, decimated ... exterminated?



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That is a loaded word. But suppose, for the sake of argument, the Palestinian population were to turn overnight into peace-loving and harmless folk: Israel would still be overturning their legal claims to place and property. Because he has nowhere else to go, Arafat may be persuaded to swallow Har Homa and continue talking, *faire accompli*. During his visit last week, King Hussein hinted at trade-offs: an airport for Gaza, release of prisoners, better connections between the autonomously administered West Bank areas and Gaza. Formally, these are, of course, points contained within the existing

Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement: from the Palestinian point of view, Israel is already committed, and cannot brandish them as a sweetener. But, a brighter light in a dark landscape, King Hussein may have a continuing role to play as honest broker. In the aftermath of the revolting killing of Israeli girls in the Jordan Valley, his demeanour impressed all sides. So, too, did the Israeli response. Surely there was a lesson in those dealings after the deaths - that inter-state relationships can survive, perhaps be strengthened, by cool heads after the actions of the maddened and the maniac. Does not

that, too, point towards the basic need for Israel to aid the creation of a Palestinian state?

Recently Arafat was in Washington DC. His visit came within days of Netanyahu's arrival in Moscow. How the world has turned since the days when Middle East relationships could be mapped on a Cold War grid. But the United States still stands alone as friend of the Israeli government, as it did when the United Nations voted on Har Homa. There are reasons for that kind of vote, above and beyond domestic US political affiliations ... it would be impermissibly naive to exonerate UN General Assembly discussions from the taint of hypocrisy and all manner of fellow travelling.

Non-action at the UN would matter a lot less if, in other forums, the United States were pushing the Netanyahu government in the right direction. But since the exertions of President Clinton's special envoy Dennis Ross, which led to the Israeli decision to stick with the withdrawal from the centre of Hebron, inertia seems to have set in.

It is nearly 11 months since Netanyahu took office. Like many passionate philo-Semites, this newspaper shuddered a little when he arrived. We fear we were right. He is embroiled in allegations of personal corruption; his political position often seems to consist of little more than continuous and unnecessary concessions to a right

wing which needs him more than vice versa. He hangs on. Now Israel's friends must hope that the parliamentary hold of the coalition weakens further, and in subsequent elections Israeli voters are given the chance to think again. A national coalition involving Labour would necessarily seek to revive the pathway opened by the Oslo Accords, based on withdrawal from the West Bank. This commitment leads towards a safer future. The construction work at Har Homa destroys it.

Ken Clarke's bad hair day

Our world has been shaken. Our deepest political convictions have been rocked. The election has barely started and yet this newspaper is gasping with shock, trembling on a shaken planet. Kenneth Clarke, whom we support as an honest man, a bad dresser and a good egg has been seen in the Commons with strange hair. A cursory glance suggests it has been blow-dried. Loath though we are even to discuss the matter in a family paper, there are those who think it has been well, dyed.

Ken, say it isn't true. Voters need some unchanging truths to hold on to. And the Chancellor's wholly admirable slobbishness is one of them.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Schools plight shows tax cut hypocrisy

Sir: Now that the Prime Minister has finally confirmed 1 May as the date for the general election, we will hear many assurances from the Conservative and Labour parties about their commitment to education.

I have just received my statement of council tax due next year. This was accompanied by a leaflet setting out the spending plans of the council. This revealed that the council is planning a cut in the education budget.

Apparently, the reason is that the amount of grant the council receives from central government has been cut following the 1p reduction in the basic rate of income tax announced in the Budget. Despite an increase in the rate of council tax, the county council has had to cut services across the board, including education.

Before Conservatives start muttering about loony left councils, they should remember that I live in Buckinghamshire, the last county council still controlled by the Conservatives. Before Labour supporters start getting smug, they should realise that this state of affairs has been caused by an income tax cut that they fully support.

While I am now too cynical to expect the electorate to wake up and vote for the only party that has made a real commitment to Britain's future with its pledges on education, I can only hope that the Conservative and Labour parties stop sounding off about their supposed commitment to education and admit that they are only interested in trying to buy our votes.

BILL COLLETT
Great Missenden, Buckinghamshire

Sir: I choose to pay high taxes. Why? I value the freedom my four-year-old son has to play in complete safety. I value being able to walk down the streets without feeling guilty at seeing the homeless and the poor.

I value being able to leave my front door unlocked, to walk without fear along the street at night, to know that when my son starts school he will be in a class of less than 30 with two, maybe three teachers. I find the money paid in taxes a very small price to pay for such a quality of life.

The country I now choose to live in? Sweden.

Perhaps, with all the election promises of low tax bills, it is useful to remember what the choice could be. Quality of life, or a little more money to survive the difficulties with?

FELICITY LING
Luleå, Sweden

Sir: Now that the general election has finally been called, we will be subjected to the usual barrage of tedious party political electioneering over the next six-and-a-half weeks. I suggest an alternative to our current method of parliamentary election, which leads to short-term, cyclical five-year policies, and cynical manipulation of the economy in the run-up to a general election.

By staggering the election of every member of parliament in weekly intervals it is possible to be continuously electing the current government, with the term of office dictated only by party majority.

By having, say, three by-elections every week we would have the equivalent of a general election every four years (assuming 651



seats), but without the wasteful hype, advertising and economic manipulation that our current election system induces. The Commons majority of a given party could be reviewed monthly.

This mechanism would provide ongoing feedback to the governing party of the nation's opinion of its performance, and allow government to look to the long-term benefit of the country.

CLIVE SKINNER
Bristol

Sir: By 6.15 this evening [Monday] I had had enough of the election coverage. Is this a record? Dr MICHAEL HOWARTH
London SW19

Train ban on breast-feeding

Sir: Recently, travelling on the Rugby-to-London InterCity train, since taken over by Virgin West Coast, I discreetly began breast-feeding my crying, hungry baby.

I was immediately approached by a member of British Rail staff and told that either I stopped, or I would be put off the train at the next stop. When I protested that the baby was hungry, I was told that breast-feeding was upsetting the other passengers in the carriage.

I felt intimidated and humiliated by the ticket collector. Most multiple stores in this country have recognised the needs of mothers and babies, and have in place policies which allow them to breast-feed in public and private areas.

Mrs H JOHNSON
Orpington, Kent

Why doctors are so stressed

Sir: W Alexander (letter, 17 March) has identified one pertinent aspect of the incipient NHS medical manpower crisis. At the bottom of all this is the fact that the old-style NHS medical staffing structure is no longer sustainable.

Even in the 15 years since I qualified, technical advances and rightly raised patient expectations mean that even a well-trained house officer or senior house officer cannot possibly manage medical and surgical emergencies until the consultant makes his ward round.

Many other factors, in particular the consequent intensity of work, have driven all doctors to move towards sustainable patterns of working. It is becoming rarer for consultants to do whole series of days on call and GPs have been forced to resort to out-of-hours centres etc.

As Paddy Ashdown has pointed out in relation to education, if the people want quality services they will have to pay for them. Health care is no exception.

Dr EVAN A BAYTON
Senior Registrar in Accident and Emergency Medicine
Warrington Hospital NHS Trust

Sir: A paper in the *British Medical Journal* recently pointed out that it is desirable that emergency care is not delivered by doctors who are chronically short of sleep. I hope

this is not controversial.

It is desirable that trained specialists provide as high a proportion of medical care in hospital as can be arranged. Training doctors well takes less time than training them badly. Once well trained, they can work as autonomous specialists.

One of the perverse incentives of the past was that it was cheaper to load duties on to junior doctors than to employ other people to do them. This is now vanishing, and medical training and patient care are improving as a result.

The massive expansion of the hospital management structure, dealing almost solely with the alleged internal market, is also funded out of the total NHS coffers. It is a better target for redistribution than the changes in medical staffing and training which are necessary to respond to changes in society and medicine.

Dr ADRIAN MIDDLEY
Chairman, Exeter Division
British Medical Association
Exeter

STEPHEN PLOWDEN
London NW1

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Dr EVAN A BAYTON
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STEPHEN PLOWDEN
London NW1

Ministers back good buildings

Sir: I do think Jonathan Glancy, in his article "Parliamentary interest in building? Never!" (7 March) is unfair in ignoring the Government's efforts to improve standards of architecture, particularly in the public sector.

His reference to the recent debate in the House of Commons includes not a single word of the Government's contribution. Jim Sproat, replying for the Government, affirmed our commitment to raising architectural standards. He recognised successes and failures, identified problems and made suggestions for addressing them.

Virginia Bottomley and I have had a number of discussions with leading architects, as well as with our colleagues in government, to consider how we can improve the quality of our buildings. John Gummer's enthusiasm has been evident in his initiative "Quality in Town and Country".

The Department of National Heritage/Department of the Environment advice on promoting and organising architectural competitions has been warmly welcomed. Competitions have become more popular and are taking on new importance to meet the great requirement for new buildings being driven by the National Lottery.

A number of options for a National Centre for Architecture and what role it might play are

examined in a report we commissioned and are circulating.

The Royal Armouries Museum in Leeds, a Private Finance Initiative project supported by this department, has received accolades. Later this year we shall publish guidance to ensure that PFI takes good architecture into account.

As Jonathan Glancy says, architecture frames most of our lives for much of the time. Neither public nor private developers always get it right. But to ignore the efforts we are making to encourage good architecture does no service to the cause of bettering architecture and design in Britain, which we are both anxious to promote.

Lord INGLEWOOD
Under-Secretary of State
Department of National Heritage
London SW1

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Dap that!

Sir: As an expat Cardiffian I am enjoying our correspondence on Welsh dialects. I only differ from R Pugh (18 March) in that in our household "to dap down" was to place an item anywhere, *pro tem*.

The meaning of "dap" as a plimsoll reminds me of a childish joke, *circa* 1950, which we thought screamingly funny.

Question: What's the fastest thing in the world?

Answer: Diarrhoea with daps on. LINDA RYMER
Moreton-in-Marsh, Gloucestershire

Sir: The word "dap" (letter, 18 March) was well known to schoolboys in Bath, Somerset, during the Second World War. You got the dap on your rear end if you forgot to bring your gas mask to school.

JOHN GORDON
Ripon, North Yorkshire

analysis

The citizens of Europe should be happy that a man of Bryan Cassidy's calibre is representing their democratic interests. At least, that's what Mr Cassidy thinks. Member of the European Parliament for Dorset and East Devon, he believes that, in return for all his hard work, Europe owes him a good living. Mr Cassidy is currently insisting that the taxpayer should give him £315, the cost of one day's pheasant shooting, which he "sacrificed" in order to travel to Belarus as an EU election monitor. "Of course I should be reimbursed," he splutters indignantly over a whisky, after a day stomping the corridors of the Strasbourg Palais. "Of course you should," says his colleague, Edward McMillan-Scott (North Yorkshire, Con). "You know what the Dutch are saying about you, Bryan... That you've been shooting peasants."

"I was pressed to Belarus at the very last minute," continues Mr Cassidy. "And bloody cold and miserable it was, too. You would have asked for your money back if you'd had to cancel a holiday due to work."

Checks pinkening, Mr Cassidy (ex-Army, ex-publishing exec) doesn't pause for long to worry about what his constituents would think about his attitude.

The MEP's "subsistence allowance" of £180 a day is barely enough "for two" (his wife, Gillian, is his assistant) to enjoy a meal at La Maison du Cygne, he says, citing the most expensive restaurant in Brussels.

"I don't see why we should

have anything but the best, I don't care what the majority of my constituents can afford. I compare myself to people earning salaries of seven figures," he explains. Anyway, the Belarus election was "fixed", says the MEP who scraped into his seat with a 2,000 majority after a 38 per cent turn out, so he should know all about democracy.

Mr Cassidy only has to glance

out of the window to see pillars of European democracy being erected all around him. Here,

twinkling in the evening light,

the parliament's brand-new

Strasbourg Palais is taking

shape, at a cost of £330m.

Meanwhile, in Brussels, another

parliament building is also near-

ing completion, at a cost of

nearly £650m. The total cost to

the tax-payer is about £1bn.

At the EU's Amsterdam

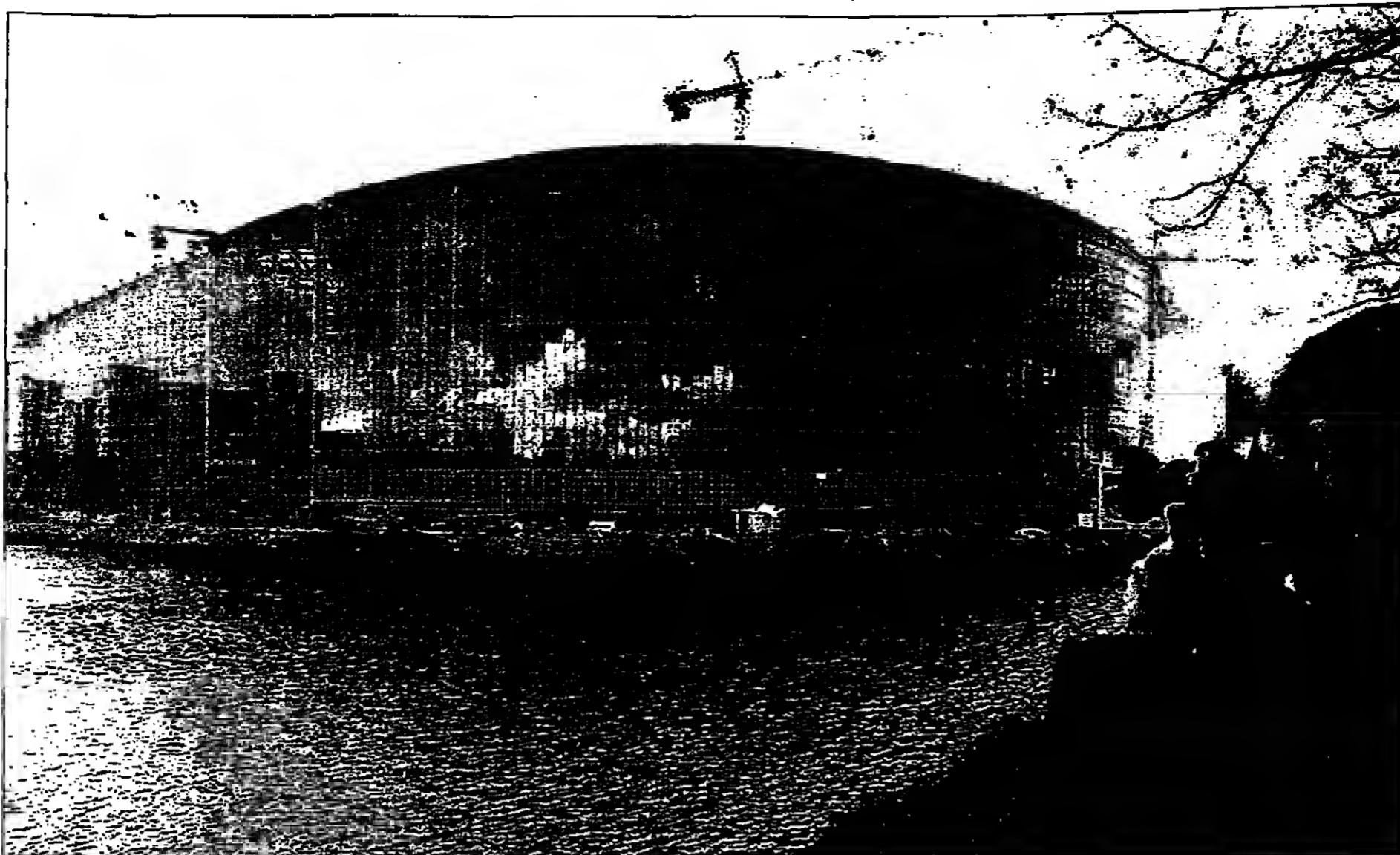
summit in June, member states

will decide to pool more pow-

ers in several crucial areas. In

1999 economic and monetary

union is scheduled to start, the



PHOTOGRAPH BY ERIC CARMON/AFP

Q: What could this building in Strasbourg be? A: Another pleasure palace for our MEPs

by Sarah Helm in Strasbourg

single largest act of European integration since the founding of the union. And early in the next millennium, enlargement to bring in Europe's eastern neighbours will begin. Given these events, Europe's leadership is under stronger pressure than ever to win the support of its citizens, to counter spreading Euro-scepticism, and to prove that the union is accountable to its citizens through a powerful parliament. To watch the cranes surging through the sky above Brussels and Strasbourg one might think that Europe was responding to these challenges by building a representative government on a grand scale. The truth is, how-

ever, that new buildings only

highlight the impotence of the institution. The shimmering masses on the Brussels and Strasbourg skylines just symbolise the waste caused as MEPs try to lay a claim to power by building facts on the ground on a breathtaking scale.

The credibility of the parlia-

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which have obliged it to oper-

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It is hard to play by the rules when there are none left

Tony Blair invoked the *I*-word, trust, yesterday, seeking to place trust at the core of the election campaign. He is right, of course, because politicians rank alongside, above, journalists at the bottom of the trust league. That perception of politicians is corrosive to democracy, and anything that can counter it must be helpful.

But the issue is bigger than just hoping that politicians seeking election will do what they say. It is about public service in general as well as politics, for remember that the government is a thin crust of a few score politicians atop a mountain of public servants. And it is not just about the narrow, if enormously important, issue of trust; it is also about the wider one of ethics, the *E*-word, the behavioural standard of governments.

Of course for all the talk of "sleaze" Britain is by no means alone in its worries. Concerns about possible falling ethical standards are surfacing throughout the developed world. They are evident in the US, throughout continental Europe, and certainly in Japan. Hardly a day goes by without some prominent person somewhere in the world being forced to resign because of some ethical shortfall. If they themselves have not done anything wrong, they are forced to resign because of the failings of some of their staff. And if they don't resign, the opprobrium is even greater, the fact that so many Tory ministers have tried to cling on has heightened our perception that they are a sneaky bunch. Wait a couple of years after the election and the new lot will be busy resigning too. Why?

This is not a people problem. People are people. While there will always be wrongs in every walk of life there is no evidence that they are more now than they used to be. It is a system problem, for we are all asking different things of government



Hamish McRae
This is a system problem. We are all asking different things of government

As the OECD points out, it is in the area of ethics that the tensions are most evident between the old rule-book approach to public administration and the new innovative, risk-taking one. "If there is too much control," it points out, "nothing will get done; but if there is too little control the wrong things will get done."

So there has to be a trade-off between a system which adds administrative cost by "trying to catch every misdeed, minor misdemeanour or actual corruption, versus the political costs of allowing some mistakes to occur."

So what do you do? The OECD public management group has drawn up an "ethics infrastructure" to try to promote ethical public behaviour. Key elements are:

— Political commitment: politicians saying they are important and setting an example.

— Legal framework: laws that set standards and enforce them.

— Accountability: audits, performance evaluation, codes of conduct, statements of values, roles, obligations.

— Education and training: supportive public service conditions: decent pay and security.

— Ethics co-ordination: to make sure similar standards of conduct apply across the board.

— Civic society: a culture which acts as a watchdog over government activities.

All this may sound self-evident — so one is going to say that it is a bad thing to have accountability for people in public service — but the fact that it needs to be said itself speaks volumes. Voters clearly do not trust governments or politicians like Tony Blair would not bang that to the top of their agendas. It is interesting that political commitment is number one on the OECD list. But saying that is the easy hit. The hard bit comes when a government makes a mistake. Does it admit it and learn from it? Are we mature enough to accept and respect that honesty? Or will we just carry on jeering while they bluster?

The trouble is, if you ask people to show initiative they will make mistakes. Indeed making mistakes is part of the learning process: that the private sector goes through in seeking

to develop and adapt service to public demands. If you don't sometimes fail, you are not trying anything new. I have always liked the story about a rising young executive in a US manufacturing company who was in charge of putting in a new \$8m computer system. It was a disaster and the whole cost had to be written off. He paddled in to the chief executive and offered to resign.

"Absolutely not," said his boss.

"We have just spent \$8m putting you through an extremely expensive management training course on computer installation and we certainly don't want you taking that expertise off to a competitor. You stay here and make sure that we never make that sort of mistake again."

You see the point. The public service ethos is completely different. A minister whose department screws up has first to try to pretend that (so to speak) the beef burgers are perfectly all right; and then when they are not, leave it to some other poor so-and-so to carry the can five years later.

The *Scotsman*'s rudery comes at an interesting moment. It says it requires an answer, in the name of honesty and fair play, to the "West Lothian Question" — in other words, once power has been devolved to a Scottish or Welsh assembly, why should the English tolerate Celtic involvement in their domestic affairs?

The Question, almost Arthurian in its significance, was named after the West Lothian MP, Tom Dally, who asked it persistently in the House of Commons in the late Seventies. But it is the oldest Unionist question of all, which came first from people like the Tory leader Arthur Balfour, who put it thus in 1914: "Are you going to leave the whole of these 72 Scottish MPs here to manage English education ... it is an irresponsible scheme!"

The *Scotsman*'s value from Balfour to Dally to John Major, has been that it seemed to put a Unionist block on self-government inside the UK for the Scots or Welsh. (The Irish have always been treated differently, largely because of their enthusiasm for supping and high explosives.)

Why? Because, if the Celts do retire from English business, then the whole jalopy crashes. Westminster would then be likely, at some stage, to find itself trying to support two different administrations at the same time. There would be the Scottish-hacked, probably Labour, government with a majority for European affairs, defence, fiscal policy and so on.

It is, of course, unthinkable. Unionists have therefore used the innocent-seeming

list, probably Tory, administration which controls health, education and much else south of the border.

This administrative schizophrenia would not last long.

You cannot have two cabinets, two leaders. One would have to dominate. Though the Liberal

Democrats have always advocated a federal Britain, with an English Assembly to match Edinburgh, Cardiff and Belfast, that seems a Utopian answer.

So, if the Question was asked, and then logically answered, it has always been assumed that the UK would break, groan and then split apart.

It is, of course, unthinkable. Unionists have therefore used the innocent-seeming

Question as a subtle threat. Decoded, it reads: "You know Scottish or Welsh devolution would annoy the English, who are numerous, rich and powerful. So you must back off."

End of home rule/locks back in their box? Not necessarily. There are other answers. It is not clear that the English would in fact be outraged by Scottish self-government, so long as the number of Scottish MPs at Westminster was cut, to reduce their influence.

David Steel argues, in addition, that an English grand committee should be established at Westminster to deal with English-only matters, just like the similar Scottish and Welsh committees. For those who are keen

on compromise, and retaining the Union, there are compromises readily available.

By contrast, demanding a logical answer to the Question will tend to drive the debate to extremes. Although the Question was framed to protect the Union, it could equally well be used as a jemmy to force it apart.

The *Scotsman*'s recent editorial begins, for instance, with a passionate plea for home rule: "We contend that the cause is just, the demand manifest, and the case beyond challenge. Democracy withers when a nation with its own legal system is denied the right to make its own laws."

If it thinks that, and understands the dangers of the Ques-

tion, then the paper is well down the path to Scottish independence. Is that what it really wants? Or is this, as appalled Labour devolutionists think, a hurdle which is meant to be too high for Tony Blair to jump — and therefore a way of justifying an anti-devolution conclusion? Everyone knows how dependent even New Labour may be on Scottish votes.

Is *The Scotsman*, therefore, covertly demanding a choice between the Tories and the SNP? That suspicion is strengthened by the fact that *The Scotsman* is now owned by the Barclay twins, strong supporters of Margaret Thatcher, and has, in Andrew Neil, an editor-in-chief who is both a Unionist and a paid-up member of the radical right.

By this reckoning, the change of direction may not be quite the agonising kick-up the Prime Minister; but it is a very painful kick up the Scottish leftish establishment's fundamental principle from a once dependable ally.

So — in short — ouch!

How should reformers respond? They certainly shouldn't shy from the Question because of party timidity or because they suspect the motives of the people who ask it. Anyway, there are bolder and more principled answers to give.

If Labour embraced voting reform, then Scotland would be a little more Tory and England would be rather more Labour and Lib Dem. The differences between the historic nations of Britain, which are greatly exaggerated by the first-past-the-post system, would be smoothed over. We would become a Union of political minds, not simply of taxpayers. The UK would become more ideologically similar, and therefore stronger, not weaker. And, of course, it would matter far less to Labour whether it had Scottish MPs to prop it up at Westminster or not.

So I think *The Scotsman* has done the whole country a service: its fundamental case is that splinters and broken half-paragaphs of reform may not be enough. Scottish home rule without voting reform would leave the Union vulnerable to a surging hawk of the radical right in England. So if Blair is driven to deliver an Edinburgh parliament, as he has promised to, he cannot shirk back. He will have to go further. Good: like a scavenged dyke, stone by stone, our whole old settlement is slowly slipping over.

The Scotsman's home rule hand-grenade

by Andrew Marr



The paper's stance is a painful kick up the Scottish leftish establishment's fundamental principle from a once dependable ally

Hey buddy, I like rude New Yorkers

David Usborne laments the city's attempts to be more polite

What are they doing to New York? Shootings and muggings are down and I have no argument with that. The transformation of Times Square from the sleazy but titillating peep-show bizarre to a sanitised Disneyville is almost complete. Now, wait for it, there is a campaign going on to make the natives more polite.

New York without its famously profane mouth would be like a lilo without its mane. Of course, the city is not all that it is cracked up to be in the rudeness department. Call me a fibber or blind, but spontaneous displays of kindness and camaraderie among New Yorkers — even to foreigners — is quite the norm. But there is a special bluntness about discourse in this city. And it is part of New York's identity.

Ask somebody for the time and you may be rewarded, as I recently was, with a less than helpful, "Get a watch, buddy". And think twice before attempting to scold a New Yorker (er, excuse me ... sorry ... would you mind very much) for queue-barging, blocking your view, putting gum under the seat next to yours or whatever it may be. "Huh?" they will fire back. "What's it to you, anyway?"

You hear worse, of course, like when the visiting team scores a home run in a packed Yankee Stadium (F*** the Braves still echo in my head) or when one New York driver blocks the path of another trying to turn left against the traffic as I witnessed this week on Park Avenue. A flawlessly coiffed woman leaned out from her polished Lexus limousine and screamed: "Get out of the way, you f***ing moron!"

Tourists anxious for a flavour of ruffian New York traditionally have needed to do nothing more than travel around it. A short trip in the hands of a New York cabby might do it. Trying to fathom the bus routes and asking help from a driver is usually good. For a sense of the sheer mania of Manhattan nothing beats the subway at rush hour — especially the No 6 line.

The city's wise fathers, however, have decided that this should not be your experience and have instituted various do-it-yourself programmes designed to make the people you meet "nicer" — as in have-a-nice-day nice. The first to be victimised were the taxi drivers. Admittedly the city was spurred to



act by a rising tide of complaints about abusive and recalcitrant chauffeurs, like the one who dumped a woman rider midway across the Queensboro Bridge after she insisted on her right to be taken across the East River.

To qualify for a licence now the candidate must be familiar with a city-peppered catalogue of 50 helpful and courteous phrases. These tips in verbal etiquette include: "I'm sorry you don't understand. I will try to speak more clearly"; "Please let me take your bags, sir (madam)"; "Thank you for hauling me, sir (madam)"; and "Madam (sir), is there any particular route you would like today?" The drivers, of course, realise that reciting the phrases would prompt most riders to consider them psychotic and run for the hills.

Now it is the bus drivers who are in finishing school. There are horror stories here too. A favourite tells of a driver on the uptown second avenue route who recently took umbrage after a woman rider allegedly insulted him. He simply parked the bus at 82nd street and stalked off, leaving the passengers inside. Mayhem ensued as riders alternately yelled at the woman and pleaded

with the driver to resume his seat. Finally, the next bus came along and rescued the disgruntled passengers.

Every driver is now being ordered to attend classes on keeping peace while at the wheel. At a cost of millions of dollars, the transport authority will dispense such nuggets as: "do not swear or call names"; "avoid sarcasm"; and "never shout at or strike a customer". Among some tricky quiz questions we have: "Elderly customers appreciate it when you drive like you are in a hurry, true or false?" To get all New York's drivers through the course will take two to three years.

But wait, what about the users? Disputes are rarely one-sided, but no one would suggest trying to brainwash every New Yorker in the art of nice. Would they? Yup, they would. This week, I found myself part of an experiment in mind-set modification on the infamous No 6 subway line at Grand Central Station. In a programme dubbed "Step Aside, Speed Your Ride", the transport authority is trying to stop New York commuters from boarding every train as if it were the last lifeboat of the Titanic. As each train runs in conductors invite you to keep outside orange boxes painted on the platform where the train doors will open. The idea is simple: let everyone out and you — and the train — will get going more quickly.

There are a few people who get kind of angry," one conductor admits. "But most people understand that we are just trying to improve service." In my few minutes observing this exercise, I am shocked to see that almost no one is daring to disobey. Only one man, looking like he is dressed for a day on Wall Street, flatly refuses to leave the box even after gentle physical encouragement.

The old New York — wondrous city of the gruff and ungracious, of the blunt and beligerent — may be disappearing. Hurry and visit before it is too late.

The lusty ways of St Hilda

St Hilda's College, Oxford, is the only place where I've walked into another girl's room to find a Clippendale. And not the type of furniture. Our last all female college at Oxford University is once again under attack. Next month, the governing body will probably vote to admit male fellows. Whenever this has happened in other female colleges, male students have inevitably followed. St Hilda's undergraduates are outraged. As well they should be.

Before I went to St Hilda's I thought of spending three years in an all-female college did not appeal. But now when I hear the cries of "anachronism", I say rubbish. It's pure jealousy. Forget the girls. Everybody wants to be a St Hilda's girl. Far from the old image of "girls in pearls", when I was there we were the bad girls, the belles of St Trinians, the Spice Girls of the university. In fact we typified Intelligent Girl Power before Geri had grown into her first trainer bra.

Somerville women had sold out allowing in men, although they were tweedy and dull to start off with (besides having the disadvantage of an old girl in Margaret Thatcher). The other former women's colleges — St Anne's, St Hugh's, Lady Margaret Hall — got swamped by the men they let in and lost their sex appeal. It is left to St Hilda's — or St Thrilla's, to use its alternative name — to stamp women's dominance on the university.

Go to a party. Half the college is there. Write for a student rag. Hilda-beasts were running the show. Act now, you couldn't escape them. In a nice normal mixed college like Lincoln, they all spent three years in the bar

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Government borrowing on track to hit target

Diane Coyle
Economics Editor

Government borrowing looks certain to be well within its target this financial year as official figures yesterday showed the strong economy was boosting tax revenues.

The Conservatives will be hoping for more good news on the economy today, with a further big decline in the number of unemployment benefit claimants expected. The one potential embarrassment will be

the publication of the minutes of Kenneth Clarke's February meeting with the Governor of the Bank of England, when the Chancellor is thought to have turned down Bank advice to increase interest rates.

Separately, a survey of nearly 250 executives by the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants found that nearly two-thirds thought their businesses should pay more tax if the money were used to increase spending on education. A similar majority said the education

system did not prepare young people adequately for working life. Of the large parties, only the Liberal Democrats have pledged to raise taxes for education spending.

The Government spent £3.6bn more than it received in taxes last month, taking the cumulative public sector borrowing requirement (PSBR) to £14.1bn in the first 11 months of the financial year. This compares with the target of £26.4bn set in the last Budget.

Even with the traditional

end-year spending surge in March, this suggests Mr Clarke could achieve a full-year total several billion pounds below his target. He will be helped by proceeds from the sale of the Housing Corporation's loan book (its month).

The Chancellor will be able to present much better figures than he forecast, not that it looks like doing him much good," said Kevin Gardiner, an economist at Morgan Stanley.

"You would have to go a long way back to find an incoming

government inheriting such a favourable set of economic circumstances."

Most City analysts think the short-term outlook for government borrowing is on an unsustainable path, with the level of debt relative to the economy having climbed sharply since 1992. This week a paper from the National Institute of Economic and Social Research argued that spending had grown much faster than tax revenues. Receipts have grown by 8.5 per cent during the past year.

"It is not until the next recession that it will become apparent that there is an underlying problem with the public finances," said David Mackie,

UK economist at investment bank JP Morgan.

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"It is not until the next recession that it will become apparent that there is an underlying problem with the public finances," said David Mackie,

running somewhat ahead of the Government's plans. Departmental spending has grown 3 per cent compared with the planned 2.4 per cent.

"The Government is finding it increasingly difficult to keep its own spending in check," said David Bloom at James Capel. Labour has pledged to stick to the Conservative plans if it wins the election.

The financial markets had another attack of the cloywobblies, with share prices, gifts and the pound all falling yesterday.



Analysts said this was related to international trends.

The pound fell by two pence to just over DM2.66 and the FTSE 100 index dropped more than 16 points to 4,356.8.

RECs hand big price cuts to 5 million customers

Chris Godsmark
Business Correspondent

Two of the largest regional electricity companies (RECs), Eastern and Southern, yesterday announced substantial price cuts from April affecting more than 5 million domestic customers.

Eastern, part of the Energy Group which recently demerged from Hanson, is cutting charges by between 6 per cent and 9 per cent, knocking £18.50 off an average £300 bill. Southern, the only REC which is still independent, is to cut around 7.2 per cent off its charges, reducing average annual bills from £272 to £245.

Both companies confirmed that the entire value of the reductions was the result of regulatory price changes they are obliged to pass on, or from the cut in the fossil fuel levy, a "tax" which subsidises nuclear power and other non-fossil fuels.

Southern had already reduced bills by 4 per cent last summer to take into account the cut in the levy. Eastern said about half of its price cut was the result of the levy reduction. The rest of the cuts come from lower National Grid transmission charges – the result of a tough new price regime starting next month – and the impact of the current distribution price cap which accounts for the bulk of the RECs' charges. This year Eastern must reduce its distribution charges by 2 percentage points below inflation.

Eastern is also introducing new pricing packages, including a tariff which offers a lower rate per unit if households spend more than £225 a year. Pre-payment meter customers will also see the £2.25 surcharge Eastern makes for the service spread across the other charges. Another innovation is a "green" tariff, to be offered later this year, where customers could buy power generated mainly from renewable energy sources.

Roy Thompson, spokesman for the Eastern Regional Consumers' Committee, was sceptical about Eastern's announcement. He said: "They haven't done anything they didn't have to do, put it that way. We also would have preferred Eastern to have abolished the prepayment meter surcharge altogether."

Separately yesterday, the Electricity Consumers' Committee (ECC), the main electricity consumer group, agreed to take up a seat on the executive committee of the Electricity Pool, the controversial body which sets wholesale power prices. The move comes after a row between the two sides over lack of consumer representation in pool affairs.

Yvonne Constance, ECC chairman, said she would "refuse to be bound by any confidentiality agreements in the pool".

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German merger battle: Unions fear £2.6bn deal instigated by smaller rival Krupp-Hoesch would lead to heavy job cuts

Steel giant Thyssen fights takeover bid

Michael Harrison
London and Imre Karacs
Bonn

The German steelmaker Krupp-Hoesch yesterday launched a hostile £2.6bn bid for its larger rival Thyssen in a move which would create Europe's biggest steelmaker and spark off a fresh round of rationalisation and savage job-cutting.

The combined group would have sales of £23bn and crude steel production of 18.1 million tonnes, making it the third-largest steelmaker in the world and eclipsing British Steel as Europe's number one producer.

But German steel unions fear that the takeover, masterminded by the controversial Krupp-Hoesch chairman, Gerhard Cromme, will merely prove the prelude to heavy job cuts with at least 10,000 of the 110,000-strong Thyssen workforce under threat.

"We will not just sit back and let this happen to us. Basically this is undiluted capitalism, pure Wild West methods," said Willy Siegerer, the deputy head of the Thyssen works council.

However, other steelmakers gave a guarded welcome to news of the bid, suggesting it could ease the continuing problem of overcapacity that has held prices down and wrought so much damage on the European steel industry.

British Steel said: "Anything which could lead to a reduction in capacity in Europe would be fairly positive."

The UK Steel Association also gave cautious backing. Ian Rodgers, its director of policy, said: "Germany has been the one member state where there

is a need for more rationalisation. If the intention of this bid is to help achieve rationalisation then that can only help the situation in Europe generally."

Steelmaking capacity within the European Union is 203 million tonnes compared with actual crude steel production last year of 148 million tonnes.

An attempt by the European Commission four years ago to broker a big reduction in capacity in return for approving further state aid for the steel industry resulted in fewer than 10 million tonnes of capacity being removed.

Hostile bids are virtually unheard-of in Germany, making yesterday's move by Krupp-Hoesch, in which the Iranian government has a 25 per cent stake, highly unusual. However,

it is consistent with Mr Cromme's track record. He created Krupp-Hoesch in 1991 by engineering Fried Krupp's hostile takeover of Hoesch with the loss of 20,000 jobs.

Union members from both companies surrounded Krupp-Hoesch's head office in Essen yesterday, shouting to Mr Cromme to address them. Mr Cromme, known in the industry as "the job-killer", hid behind bullet-proof glass and shouted back.

Report of 30,000 job losses in the steel industry after a takeover of Thyssen were "pure panic-mongering," he told the protesters. There was, he assured them, no plan to close any plants, though the merged company would try to streamline production. The workers re-

sponded at one point by trying to storm the building and then pelting it with eggs.

Krupp-Hoesch is offering DM435 per share, a 25 per cent increase on the final price reached before shares in both companies were suspended in Frankfurt. Thyssen shares jumped to DM410 in unofficial trading after the announcement.

Krupp-Hoesch employs 66,000 people, and in the fiscal year ending 31 December reported a net profit of DM208m on sales of DM248m. For the fiscal year ending 30 September Thyssen reported a net profit of DM350m on sales of DM38.7bn. It had a market value of just under DM12bn before the shares were suspended.

Krupp-Hoesch said the planned merger was in response to intense global competition. In order to stay competitive, German industry had to cut its costs of production, logistics and distribution. "It is indispensable to achieve sufficient size in business in accordance with global standards," Krupp-Hoesch said in a statement.

Analysts say that synergies between the two companies in flat steel products and automotive pressings would make the merger attractive and could pave the way for the cost cuts needed to improve Germany's competitiveness against other European steel makers. A tonne of crude steel produced by Thyssen costs DM160, compared with DM155 in France and DM120 by British Steel.

For that reason, the bid is not likely to be opposed by the German authorities, but it will have to be approved by the European Commission.

How British Steel measures up	
British Steel	Krupp-Thyssen
Turnover £7bn	£24bn
Pre-tax profits £1.1bn	£210m
Employees 54,000	195,000
Production costs £45 (per tonne)	£60

World's top steel producers	
Company	Output (millions tonnes)
1 Nippon Steel	27.8
2 Posco	23.4
3 Krupp-Thyssen	18.1
4 British Steel	15.6
5 Usinor Saclor	15.5
6 US Steel	12.1
7 NKK	12.0
8 Arbed	11.5
9 Kawasaki	11.1
10 Sumitomo	10.5



Under siege: Gerhard Cromme, chairman of Krupp-Hoesch (left), being protected from demonstrators by company security guards holding protective shields outside the steelmaker's headquarters in Essen yesterday

Photograph: AP

Second warning sends DK shares crashing

Tom Stevenson
City Editor

Shares in Dorling Kindersley crashed to a three-year low yesterday after the illustrated book and CD-Rom publisher warned that the strong pound, trading problems in America and an accounting change would hit profits in the year to June. It was the company's second warning in three months and yesterday's 51p fall to 270p means the former 51p share has more than halved its value over the past year.

Since the shares peaked at 645p last May, more than £260m has been wiped from DK's market capitalisation, reducing the value of the stake held by founder Peter Kindersley's family by almost £100m. He remained defiantly positive yesterday, insisting the problems facing the company were one-off blips.

Analysts reacted less sanguinely to news that, despite a 9 per cent rise in half-year profits to £6.78m, the full-year result would lag last year's £17.4m. One broker slashed his forecast from £18m to £10m.

The company blamed an upturn in the American book-selling industry for trading problems in a market which now accounts for 41 per cent of group turnover. Large chains such as Barnes & Noble had reined in the rapid growth of recent years. Mr Kindersley said, and reduced stock in a bid to counter mounting losses.

The soaring pound is also causing problems, with 70 per cent of DK's sales made overseas, although it had warned the City of the threat last December. More unexpected was the announcement that software development costs, which were

amortised over the life of DK's increasingly important CD-Rom products, would be written off as incurred. That reduced half-year profits by £1.6m.

To counter the problems in its retail sales channels, Mr Kindersley said DK would accelerate the expansion of its direct sales operation. Dorling Kindersley Family Learning, which employs around 20,000 consultants to sell books and CD-Roms straight to homes and schools.

A target of 50 per cent of sales by 2000 has been set, up from 15 per cent currently, and operations in Australia and Russia have been launched.

Mr Kindersley said he was confident of the future of electronic publishing. DK saw multimedia sales rise 31 per cent in the period to account for 15 per cent of group turnover.

The exploded book, page 3

Grand Met's plans to tap into Chinese spirits

Teresa Poole
Peking

Confucius, who had a very strict view of the "virtuous, moral life", would not have approved. In his birthplace of Qufu, in Shandong province, bottles of Smirnoff vodka, Grand Reserve VSOF, and Old Gold whisky are now rolling off the production lines at Grand Metropolitan's first Chinese joint venture, which was officially opened this week.

But Chinese supplies develop a taste for vodka? "The issue here is about developing a new category," Richard Watling, Asia managing director for the group's drinks arm, International Distillers and Vintners (IDV), said yesterday. "Vodka is a tiny category in China today. We think there is an opportunity to develop

Smirnoff into the refreshment drinking area, that it is the younger consumer who are prepared to experiment, willing to pay a little bit of extra money for a high quality product that is articulate and a long drink. To that extent we are probably competing as much with premium local beers, in other words, vodka will not be pitched to head against the national white spirit – 'baijiu'.

The Qufu production line is a \$37m (£17m) venture with the state-owned Qufu Distillery, producers of the successful "Confucius Family Liquor". IDV has a two-thirds stake, and its Chinese partner holds the rest.

Advertising starts this week in Shanghai for Smirnoff, or Si Mei Luo (Thinking Beautiful, the Wu River) as it is known in China. It is a wholly Chinese-made product. Grand Reserve, or Di

Xuan (Emperor's Choice) brandy, is a new brand name to be pitched at the southern city of Guangzhou. Old Gold, or Ao Jin (Old Gold), whisky is on sale in Peking, a brand name previously only used in Brazil, but a blend of premium local beers.

Local production is IDV's preferred long-term strategy. So far, IDV's imports have been well under \$100m a year, because its brands do not compete with premium status liquors. But Grand Met's chairman, George Bull, yesterday said that, with imports accounting for less than 1 per cent of the China total, IDV was aiming at the "huge potential" of the domestically produced market.

And at less than £8 a bottle, the first three products are more affordable than imports, which are tariff rated at 70 per cent.

Limelight shares in slump

Shares in the Moven Kitchens to Dolphin bathrooms group Limelight crashed 35p to 107.5p yesterday only months after the group came to the market at 175p, netting £60m for the company's founder, Stephen Boler, writes Tom Stevenson.

The melt-down in the company's share price so soon after flotation is a serious embarrassment for its blue chip advisers, the sponsor N M Rothschild and the broker Cazenove.

The collapse in the share price followed confirmation by the company that trading in the first 12 weeks of the year had been difficult.

Limelight said total group sales were 11 per cent less than the same period a year ago, with its kitchen division the worst affected. Sales in kitchens are down 24 per cent on last year, the company said

Stagecoach could be in for a very rough ride

COMMENT

'In the absence of any form of regulation for the bus industry Stagecoach has made a fortune by crunching the competition and, along the way, the customer as well. The railways are not turning out quite the same way'

Brian Cox, the chairman of South West Trains, must be used by now to apologising for cancellations; his long-suffering passengers are certainly used to taking his published timetables with generous helpings of salt. The one cancellation he will not be apologising for, however, is the craven decision of MPs to abandon today's scheduled grilling of SWT before the Commons Transport select committee.

The Conservative majority on the committee has decided that it would not be appropriate to continue with its work programme now that an election has been called. Nothing to do, you understand, with the appalling advertisement for rail privatisation that SWT has turned into.

Those who had been looking forward to some blood sport on the committee corridor of the Commons will have to console themselves instead with the press conference called by the Labour minority to protest at this blatant piece of politicking. Mr Cox's day will come, however. Presuming Labour does sweep to power, SWT may be in for a rougher ride than anything the select committee could throw at it.

That goes not just for SWT, but for its parent company Stagecoach too. In four short years the group has been transformed from a modest bus operator into one of the biggest quoted transport groups on the market by a combination of chairman Brian Souter's guile and the willingness of sober-suited bankers to throw money at him.

Stagecoach is a classic example of a business that has risen too fast on a tide of cheap paper, mounting debts and the deal-making reputation of one man. So far Mr Souter has had all the breaks. He spotted that the bus industry was being privatised in a way that put passengers very firmly in the back seat, leaving entrepreneurs such as him to drive through what passes for competition policy.

In the absence of any form of regulation for the bus industry, Stagecoach has made a fortune by crunching the competition and, along the way, the customer as well. Unfortunately, the railways are not turning out quite the same way. They have tiresome things like performance regimes, minimum standards and big fat fines for those who cut too many corners.

The City is belatedly waking up to the possibility that Stagecoach has over-extended itself. An incoming Labour government and a much more hostile regulatory environment may be all it takes to turn the run into a rout.

Labour's utilities policy smacks of confusion

It was a little rich of Labour to seize on yesterday's Trade and Industry Select Committee report on energy regulation to back its case for a windfall profits tax. That was not what the report either said or implied, though

it did make the entirely obvious and uncontroversial observation that electricity profits had been excessive and that this was in part down to the fact that regulators had underestimated the scope for efficiency gains.

Moreover, the report actually contradicts Labour policy in recommending the retention of the RPI minus X system of price regulation. This is found to be a superior system to any of the other methods examined. Labour policy for regulating the electricity industry has not yet been set in concrete, but it has for water and it is reasonable to assume that Labour would wish to apply the same "profit sharing" principles to electricity.

Unfortunately for Labour, "annual formula profit sharing" and other alternatives such as "rate of return" and "sliding scale regulation" are specifically dismissed by the committee "because they are likely to erode incentives". Quite so, but were the committee's Labour members aware they were dissolving party policy when they signed up to this document? After Gordon Brown's continued confusion yesterday about what the windfall profit tax would apply to and on what basis, it seems all too likely that they were not.

It is still not clear what Labour wants to do about the utilities, other than make political capital out of them and pillage them for as much as it dares in its search for new forms of taxation. Now along comes the Trade and Industry select committee to say that the present system of price regulation be left pretty much unchanged.

The irony is that this is the very same system that resulted in the "excess" everyone complains of. Furthermore, it is a system which in a way is actually designed to encourage excess. The idea behind price cap regulation is that it provides encouragement to improved efficiency because companies are allowed to keep for shareholders any "excess" return they earn. These efficiency gains are then recognised by customers at the time of the five-year periodic review.

What the windfall profits tax does, in effect, is retrospectively attempt to claw back these "excess" returns. It is hard not to draw the conclusion that intellectually Labour is all at sea over these issues.

Landica won't profit from waking up Co-op

Labour has promised it would change the rules to protect the Co-op movement from break-up but in the meantime what is the Co-op doing to save itself? The Co-op may have its heart in the right place but is also paralysed by its worthy democratic traditions and riven by the in-fighting of its vested interest groups. If it fails to re-invent itself, it will face death by a thousand cuts.

Take the following. The Co-op movement is run for the benefit of the 51 different regional societies which in turn have 560,000 members between them. Individual mem-

bership costs £1 for life. It is refundable if you leave but cannot be sold at a profit. Benefits include a free glossy magazine, discount vouchers in some societies, and the option to join the Co-Op Women's Guild.

Not tempted? The biggest supposed benefit is the opportunity to have your say in the running of your society going from divisional committee, to regional committee and if lucky and well connected, on to the board. It is a creaking, bureaucratic structure that would never be invented if it did not already exist. The question is what can be done to change it.

One approach would be to merge the 51 societies into one to achieve greater economies of scale. A second would be to start marketing itself on its Co-Op credentials, rather as the Co-Op Bank has done so successfully with its stance on ethical investing. A third is to revive the "divi". This scheme, which qualifies members for a 5 per cent discount, is already on test in Northern Ireland and has recently been revived in Scotland.

The overtures of the youthful Andrew Regan at Landica Trust look doomed for one simple reason. Unlike the mutual building societies, the individual members do not actually own their society, they just qualify for a say in its operation. As that stake cannot be sold at a profit Mr Regan looks to be on a hiding to nothing. He's shaken a complacent and very dozy old organisation, but he's unlikely to make a penny for his trouble.

BZW chief gets package of over £3m

John Willcock

Barclays paid Bill Harrison, chief executive of its BZW investment bank unit, £2.85m last year, in part due to a £1.5m "golden hello" for when he joined from Robert Fleming.

This is in stark contrast to Barclays' chairman, Andrew Buxton, who received £505,000 in salary and bonuses last year, while the chief executive, Martin Taylor, was paid £320,000. The bank's annual report,

The Institute of Directors, the free-market body representing senior company directors, yesterday defended big boardroom pay packages and blamed bad publicity about "fat cat salaries" for harming the image of business.

In a research paper Ruth Lea, who heads the IoD's policy unit, said she accepted there were legitimate concerns about pay but argued that big companies were right to award managers big pay rises as a fair reward for success.

"The nation's prosperity depends on them. If they perform their tasks well they should be well rewarded," she said.

Lira falters on talk of EMU delays

Yvette Cooper

The sensitivity of the markets to any adverse news about EMU was exposed yesterday when the mark climbed to a four-month high against the lira following claims by Klaus Dieter Kuehnebacher, a Bundesbank council member, that the introduction of the single currency may have to be delayed.

Mr Kuehnebacher said: "If I interpret the criteria verbatim as Finance Minister Theo Waigel has always demanded... delay is the only consequence unless the federal government still manages to limit the deficit to 3 per cent of GDP [and of that] in view of the current economic development I have my doubts." His comments followed Monday's reiteration by Mr Waigel that meeting the deficit criteria was more important than the EMU timetable.

The lira fell yesterday to its lowest level against the mark since rejoining the exchange rate mechanism in November last year, ending the day at 1005.8 against the mark. The peseta also suffered from the concerns about a delay to EMU. The Bank of Spain and the Bank of Italy intervened during the day to sell marks. European bonds weakened, with Italian and Spanish bonds taking most of the strain. The moves were on a day when Italy became the first country to issue a euro denominated eurobond, raising \$720m.

Analysts said the markets had become highly sensitive

published yesterday, also shows that Mr Harrison was guaranteed an annual bonus of £1.25m payable at the end of this month. He was also paid a third of his £300,000 salary

since joining last September.

Mr Harrison's total "emoluments" for the year increased to over £3.1m when share award schemes and pension contributions are included.

A Barclays spokesperson said that most of Mr Harrison's pay package was a one-time cash

payment that was the cost of recruiting him and was required to attract a manager of his calibre. The guaranteed bonus was also a one-off.

"It's not that he's going to get £2.9m every year," said the spokesperson. "He's going to get £300,000 plus a bonus."

Mr Harrison's guaranteed minimum bonus for 1997 is £900,000, which is payable by the end of March next year, according to the accounts.

The spokesperson added that

"But all too often high pay packages have not been properly handled and this has led to the all-too-familiar media outrage which has hurt business's image. It is vital that pay packages are fully explained." Ms Lea said pay rises for directors were "within the range of European practice and well below those in the US".

The IoD found that small company directors' pay was relatively modest with the boss of a £25m-a-year business earning £52,000, plus a bonus of £12,000. The head of a company with sales of between £25m and £200m earned on average £82,250 plus a £20,000 bonus.

Mr Harrison's pay should only be judged against that of his American investment banking rivals, who often get much more.

The figures come against a background of difficult times for BZW. Its pre-tax profits fell 29 per cent to £204m last year as an 18 per cent rise in costs outstripped revenue growth.

Mr Harrison, former head of investment banking at Flemings, was his after the death of his predecessor David Band last March. Mr Taylor picked him as the man to lead BZW on to the world stage, where at the moment New York-based "bulge bracket" investment banks like Morgan Stanley and Merrill Lynch dominate.

Mr Band and Mr Taylor had already identified a key obstacle to joining the bigger US rivals, the relative weakness of BZW's markets division. This division includes bonds, derivatives and foreign exchange, and it underperformed last year.

Since his arrival Mr Harrison

has embarked on an aggressive and expensive hiring campaign. Bob Diamond, former vice chairman of Crédit Suisse First Boston, has been headhunted to lead the markets division.

More than 140 new staff have arrived since Mr Diamond joined.

This drive continued yesterday with the top-profile appointment of Roman Schmidt, head of German capital markets at Deutsche Morgan Grenfell. Prior to that he worked at CSFB in London, and he typifies the big appointments Mr Harrison has been making in an attempt to turn the investment bank around.

The downside is that BZW has been forced to let go other employees. Buying these City people out of their contracts added £45m to BZW's wages bill last year.

Bill Harrison: A guaranteed £1.25m bonus is also due to lead the markets division. More than 140 new staff have arrived since Mr Diamond joined.

Since his arrival Mr Harrison has embarked on an aggressive and expensive hiring campaign. Bob Diamond, former vice chairman of Crédit Suisse First Boston, has been headhunted to lead the markets division.

first results for the combined group. Merger costs came to SFr1.9bn after tax. Novartis expects to shed around 4,300 people over the next three years, with 400 going in the UK by the end of 1997. The group plans to centre its respiratory research efforts at a new unit in Sussex, employing 500 people.

Photograph: Reuter

Cantab seals £11m deal with Glaxo

Magnus Grimond

The recent strong run in the shares of Cantab Pharmaceuticals, the biotech group, was brought to an abrupt end yesterday after it announced an £11m deal with Glaxo Wellcome.

The drugs giant is paying £5m for the world-wide marketing and development rights for Cantab's DISC HSV vaccine for genital herpes and investing £6m for a 4 per cent stake in the company.

Analysts said the market

had started well and argued it was a more efficient operator than London Clubs, which counts the Ritz Club and Les Ambassadeurs among its seven casinos in the capital.

Capital claimed that in the last four years it made operating profits of £13m on every £100m turnover, compared with £20m for London Clubs.

The defence document also shows that pre-tax profits at Capital slipped to £9.2m, after an exceptional charge of £2.8m, from £13.1m previously.

The profits were flagged in a

speculation it would take the Crofords name overseas. "We are not distracted by unsuccessful, risky or speculative overseas ventures," it said.

In response London Clubs, which also has casino interests in South Africa and Las Vegas, said the comparable figure for its two top-end casinos was £39m and noted that Capital's prof-

its bad fallen in each of the last four years.

Capital Corporation's track record does not allow it to put up a credible defence," said Alan Goodenough, London Clubs' chief executive. "The company's offer document demonstrates a lack of understanding of how to maximise returns from the London gaming market.

Capital director's wife owns shares in casino predator

Patrick Toohr

The wife of Capital Corporation's gaming director has emerged as the surprise owner of shares in London Clubs, the rival casino operator which has tabled a £1.8bn takeover bid.

Capital, owner of two upmarket casinos in London's Mayfair, including Crofords, yesterday issued its formal defence docu-

ment, which showed that Julie Dunkley holds 2,000 shares in London Clubs in a single-company personal equity plan.

By contrast her husband, John Dunkley, does not own a single share in Capital Corporation, though the £200,000-a-year director of gaming holds 1.5 million options worth £3.2m at last night's closing price of 210p, down 3p.

Capital said the new year had started well and argued it was a more efficient operator than London Clubs, which counts the Ritz Club and Les Ambassadeurs among its seven casinos in the capital.

Capital claimed that in the last

four years it made operating profits of £13m on every £100m turnover, compared with £20m for London Clubs.

The defence document also

shows that pre-tax profits at Capital slipped to £9.2m, after an exceptional charge of £2.8m, from £13.1m previously.

The profits were flagged in a

speculation it would take the Crofords name overseas. "We are not distracted by unsuccessful, risky or speculative overseas ventures," it said.

In response London Clubs, which also has casino interests in South Africa and Las Vegas, said the comparable figure for its two top-end casinos was £39m and noted that Capital's prof-

its bad fallen in each of the last four years.

Capital Corporation's track record does not allow it to put up a credible defence," said Alan Goodenough, London Clubs' chief executive. "The company's offer document demonstrates a lack of understanding of how to maximise returns from the London gaming market.

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business

Bobby Moore's son finds a new home at Chelsea

PEOPLE & BUSINESS

Every schoolboy knows that the great Bobby Moore, captain of England's triumphant World Cup soccer team in 1966, played for West Ham. Now I hear that Bobby's son, Dean Moore, has been made publican of the Chelsea Gate, a pub slap bang opposite Chelsea's ground at Stamford Bridge.

Mr Moore jnr has been assigned this pub by The Magic Puff Company, which acquired it with a bundle of other hoovers last year from Greene King for £200m. Can this Chelsea appointment be a practical joke at the young Mr Moore's expense?

Mounted police are stationed outside the doors of The Chelsea Gate on match days. Whether this is to prevent angry Chelsea fans from wreaking revenge on the son of their former East End rival remains a mystery.

The bitter-sweet news reaches us that Sam Jaffa, noted BBC journalist, has leapt the fence to become head of media relations for Price Waterhouse, the big-six accountancy firm.

Hymning the joys of audits and corporation tax will be quite a contrast to Mr Jaffa's 17-year sojourn at the Beeb. He has reported on the Troubles in Northern Ireland, the Zeebrugge ferry disaster and the Wapping print riots, to name just a few.

He is also famous for having been introduced by a presenter when he was in Belfast with the line: "Sam Jaffa was with the Orangemen."

So why the change to accountancy? "I know people think it's selling out, but I look at it as selling in," he says. "It was time for a change, and PW came up with an attractive offer."

A jovial and sociable 44-year-old from Leeds who now lives in Chelsea, Mr Jaffa was known for throwing parties for fellow journalists during the lengthy Blue Arrow trial



Eastender: Bobby Moore in his West Ham glory days

He was also paid glowing tributes by his successor, by Lord Stevens, the chairman of United News & Media, and by Dugan Nisbet-Smith, the recently retired director of the Newspaper Society.

But he left no doubt that his departure was not voluntary and he has no firm plans for the future. "At the tender age of 53 I am fortunate to have this unique thrust upon me when I can still look forward to putting in a few more years broadening my experience elsewhere," he told his colleagues.

He had been chief executive since 1985 and chairman since 1988. He was on a two-year contract and his remuneration in 1995 was £205,311. He also holds options on around 183,000 shares. Mr Grabiner, 38, was formerly managing director of the *Daily Telegraph* and joined UNM last year as executive director with responsibility for all the group newspapers, including the *Express* titles, and as chief executive of UPN, which is being refocused on its heartland in Yorkshire and the North of England.

Returning to East End sporting heroes for a moment, former heavyweight pugilist Henry Cooper will be among those playing a charity golf tournament, the City Open, organised by Reuters in aid of the Teenage Cancer Trust.

The first stage in April involves 40 pairs per day at 10 golf days, most at the London Golf Club near Sevenoaks.

Each pair pays £200 to enter the knock-out round, and the finalists will play in the Bahamas at the end of May.

The organisers aim to raise £10,000 for the charity.

More details can be found on Cinescreen on Reuters by typing in KIDS and hitting enter.

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RACING: On the eve of tomorrow's start to a new season on the level, the top trainers tell Ian Davies their horses to follow

Fancy free as the Flat moves to centre stage

JACK BERRY

"Somoserra, a two-year-old colt by Paris House, should go well in the Brookesley Stakes at Doncaster [tomorrow]. The string isn't as forward as usual but my yard has a reputation for having its horses ready early and I feel that, if I don't get mine as fit as I would like, I'll be letting the punters down. Somoserra has been showing speed at home and, although I'm in the dark as to how he will compare with other trainers' two-year-olds, I'm hoping he'll give a good account. Hey-Up-Mate [named after the trainer's method of expressing salutations] is another likely early sort, who should soon be running."

CLIVE BRITTAINE

"Fantasic Fellow has done extremely well over the winter and I'm aiming him at the Greenham Stakes at Newbury on route to the 2,000 Guineas. A big strong colt, he won a York maiden before finishing fourth to Desert King in the National Stakes at the Curragh. He led until near the finish when fourth to Bahamian Bound in the Middle Park Stakes at Newmarket. He will need a mile. Air Express is another who has wintered well. He's very sturdy and did well last year, despite a cracked hoof. He will be aimed at the Free Handicap at the Craven meeting before going for the 2,000 Guineas."

NEVILLE CALLAGHAN

"Danetime has come on over the winter. He won a maiden as a juvenile over six furlongs and was second in the Houghton Stakes but will want seven furlongs or a mile this year. Chief-tain is a two-year-old I like. He is by Indian Ridge and has been showing ability. He will be ready to run in April."

PETER CHAPPLER-HYAM

"Revoque is in great form. He has wintered very well and has grown about half an inch, which is about right. I have kept him on the go and he has just done his first serious piece of work. He will run in a Classic trial only if the weather gets bad and he is held up in his work. Otherwise he will go straight for either the 2,000 Guineas or the French 2,000 Guineas at Longchamp, where he enjoyed so much success as a two-year-old. I hope Revoque will be a Derby horse, while I'm sure he'll stay 10 furlongs, I can't be sure about him staying a mile and a half. Royal Court has strengthened up really well and I think he has a big future. He ran a terrific race when two lengths third to Dushyant and Mons in the Great Voltigeur Stakes and I reckon he had simply had enough for the year when he was fourth to Wall Street in the Cumberland Lodge Stakes on Frankie Dettori day at Ascot."



John Dunlop: Bahhare plan

ROGER CHARLTON

"King Alex had some problems last year and ran only twice, winning a Leicester maiden and then finishing second to Dr Massin at York. He has come on over the winter and I will be looking to start him off in a conditions race over 10 furlongs in April. He will stay a mile and a half and should develop into a pattern-race performer. He would not want the ground too firm and might prove suited by an easy surface. Wixian is another lightly-raced sort, who should progress. He won a Ripon maiden last year and runs in the Doncaster Mile [tomorrow]."

PAUL COLE

"Yorkshire had physical problems last year and was prone to scarring easily, but he has come through the winter extremely well. He won easily over a mile at Salisbury and [he is] Cole's 1991 Derby winner. Generous I and I reckon he had simply had enough for the year when he was fourth to Wall Street in the Cumberland Lodge Stakes on Frankie Dettori day at Ascot."

LUCA CUMANI

"Man Howa has done very well and should achieve things this year. He showed promise as a two-year-old, finishing second to Yashmak in a six-furlong Newmarket maiden before winning a similar race in July. Having had only the two runs he is very fresh and could improve a lot. He will be ready to run in April and will be suited by seven furlongs to a mile. Janniy Jack ran three times last year, finishing second each time and the form of those races looks soft. Bahhare has never run on anything

but fast ground and I don't think he'd like it soft. He will then go for the 2,000 Guineas. *Timeform* seems to think he might stay the Derby trip, but I have my doubts. His half-brother Bahri didn't and I'm inclined to think he will be a miler. Silver Patriarch is a stayer. He won a listed race over a mile and a quarter at Newmarket and will start off in a Derby trial simply because, having won that pattern race, there's nothing else for him. He could run in the Derby but, even at this stage, I think he might be more of a St Leger horse."

JOHN DUNLOP

"Generous Gift is a three-year-old who has matured in recent months and should stay a mile and a half. He was a close second in a mile maiden at Thirsk and will start off in a mile and a quarter maiden at the Craven meeting. Janniy Jannah has had lots of problems. She ran once as a two-year-old and again made only one appearance last year when winning a Pontefract maiden by five lengths. Although that was on a fast surface, I think she needs to give. The plan is to get her some black type [awarded for winning or being placed in a pattern race – which enhances stud value]. She won over a mile but might have the speed to prove effective at seven furlongs."

JOHN DUNLOP

"Bahhare has done well physically over the winter. He has strengthened up and my intention is to run him in the Craven Stakes rather than the Greenham at Newbury, where the ground is somewhat soft. Bahhare has never run on anything but fast ground and I don't think he'd like it soft. He will then go for the 2,000 Guineas. *Timeform* seems to think he might stay the Derby trip, but I have my doubts. His half-brother Bahri didn't and I'm inclined to think he will be a miler. Silver Patriarch is a stayer. He won a listed race over a mile and a quarter at Newmarket and will start off in a Derby trial simply because, having won that pattern race, there's nothing else for him. He could run in the Derby but, even at this stage, I think he might be more of a St Leger horse."

WILLIE HAGGAS

"Yeast is a thoroughly genuine horse who I'm lucky to have. He's high in the weights for handicaps now and we're hoping to turn him into a pattern-race performer. He'll need to progress again and we will have a lot more idea of how he's shaping after he runs in the Doncaster Mile [tomorrow]. If he wins that, he may go for the Sandown Mile although he is best on a straight track. Royal Crusade is a nice colt by Driesis who won the Chesterfield Maiden Stakes over a mile at Newmarket last year. He is a bit of a handful today. The Nettle Dancer was beaten off in the Netherton Stakes last year and the form of those races looks soft. He will be ready to run in April and will be suited by seven furlongs to a mile. I think he might be more of a St Leger horse."

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A dream in decline
David Winner on life after
Bosman for Ajax, page 26

sport

Tennis Oscars

John Roberts on

Henman's progress, page 26

Premiership clubs join queue for Klinsmann

Football

NICK DUXBURY

English clubs were licking their lips yesterday at the prospect of Jürgen Klinsmann ending his career back in the Premiership.

The former Tottenham Hotspur striker announced that he is to give up his lucrative contract at Bayern Munich after talks with the club's chairman, Franz Beckenbauer.

"I told him that I would

probably play abroad next season," the 32-year-old German international said. "I don't fit in here. I wanted to tell Bayern now so that they can plan for the future. There are many reasons [why I am leaving] and I have decided to act."

As well as interest here, clubs in Spain and Italy will also be on the alert and there is the possibility that his swan-song could be played out in the United States.

Klinsmann, who captained Germany to victory at last year's

European Championship, returned to his homeland in 1995 after a successful spell with Spurs during which he was voted England's Footballer of the Year and was a hugely popular figure with the fans.

He complained earlier in the season that he was unhappy with Bayern's defensive tactics and the way he had been treated when his form dipped. He has often been at odds with the club's captain, Lothar Matthäus, his predecessor in charge of the national team and

has found it difficult to cope with the squabbling which is part of everyday life at Bayern.

"It was obvious that the whole ballyhoo in Munich got on Jürgen's nerves," the Bayern general manager, Uli Hoeneß, said. "He has said that himself many times."

Queen's Park Rangers are ready to report Sampdoria to the governing body of world football, Fifa, over their free transfer signing of Danny Dichio. The striker will sign a three-year contract when his current deal ex-

pires at the end of the season. Players are allowed to arrange a move six months before a contract ends, but Rangers claim that Sampdoria broke the rules by not informing them that negotiations were in progress.

Tony Yeboah will be fined a fortnight's pay for ripping off his Leeds United shirt and throwing it at his manager, George Graham, after being substituted during Saturday's defeat at Tottenham.

"George will be disciplining him with a fine which is ex-

pected to be around two weeks' wages," the club's secretary, Nigel Pleasant, said yesterday. He declined to say how much Yeboah was paid.

Arsenal have signed the 19-year-old keeper Alexander Manninger from the Austrian club Casino Graz after a two-day trial at Highbury. The fee is believed to be around £500,000.

The Leicester keeper Kasey Keller could lose his Coca-Cola Cup final place because of his World Cup commitments with the United States. Keller,

who was unavailable for last Saturday's game with Middlesbrough, is also ruled out of today's home match with Tottenham and the weekend encounter at Southampton. The Bournemouth keeper, Ian Andrew, has been signed on loan for a month as cover for Keller.

The Football Association has dismissed reports that negotiations aimed at ending the damaging feud between Peter Schmeichel and Ian Wright have broken down.

It has been claimed that le-

gal advisors acting on behalf of Schmeichel had informed the FA that the Manchester United goalkeeper had rejected the offer of a reconciliatory meeting with the Arsenal striker Wright.

An FA spokesman, Steve Double, insisted that the content of negotiations remained confidential, but added: "We don't accept that Peter Schmeichel has snubbed the peace offer." Schmeichel has rejected accusations of racism after clashing with Wright twice this season.

Boro begin countdown to survival

Middlesbrough embark on a crucial eight-day survival period on and off the field when they take on Blackburn at the Riverside Stadium tonight.

Middlesbrough, who could move off the bottom if Southampton slip up at Chelsea, follow up with further home games against Chelsea on Saturday and Nottingham Forest on Monday.

Two days later they face a Football Association appeal panel in the hope of winning back the three points deducted for their failure to fulfil their away date with Blackburn earlier in the season.

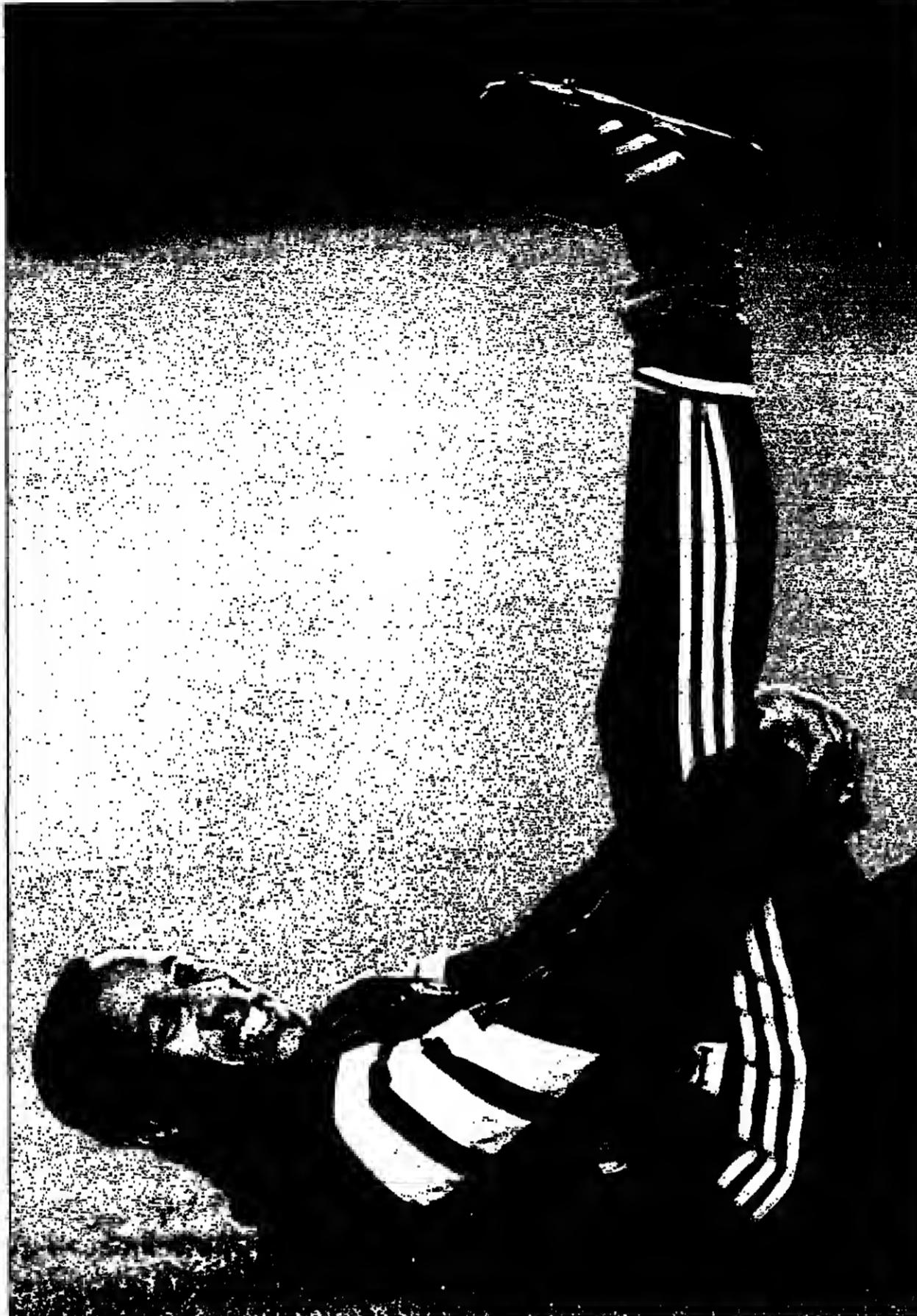
The significance of the next few days is not lost on their manager, Bryan Robson. He said: "The next three games could shape the rest of the season for us. We like Blackburn, have improved since the turn of the year. Top quality players were missing at one stage, but they have made a difference on their return."

"They have risen to the challenge. Now we have to build on that. The confidence among the players is sky high and the lads are buoyant, but they will have to work hard."

Following 6-1 and 3-1 wins over Derby and Leicester respectively, Boro are looking for a third straight win for the first time since September and are boosted by the news Gianluca Festa, Nigel Pearson, Fabrizio Ravanelli and Emerson are all fully fit after an outbreak of food poisoning.

Blackburn will have their leading scorer Chris Sutton available again after a five-match injury absence. Their caretaker manager, Tony Parkes, must decide whether to break up the Pele-Pedersen-Kevin Gallacher partnership which has produced six goals in the summer.

Blackburn was the butt of the crowd's anger last week after squandering a golden chance against Forest, but he impressed in Saturday's win over Leeds. He is now waiting to see if he will retain his place as David Howells and Allan Nielsen are free from suspension for the match at Leicester.



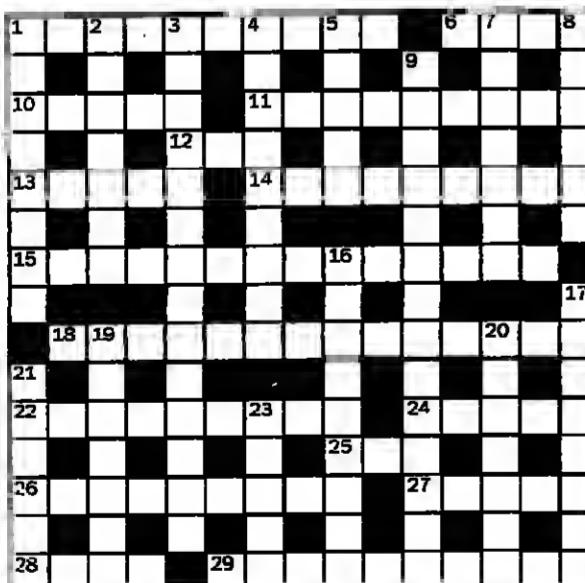
Despite training with Newcastle in Monte Carlo, Les Ferdinand failed a late fitness test for last night's UEFA Cup match against Monaco. The French league side held a 1-0 lead from the first leg. Photograph: Owen Humphreys/PA

THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 3250. Wednesday 19 March

By Agatha

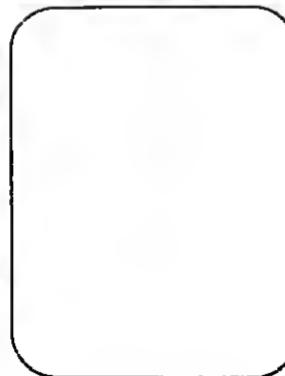
Tuesday's Solution



CROSS
1. Swish heard, possibly from domestic appliance (10)
6. Traffic in Southwest, a problem at first (4)
10. May love oak and thorn (5)
11. Messy, that setting of purple sapphires (9)
12. Unit of inner energy? (13)
13. Doctor breaking law with slow delivery (5)
14. Constitution of UN to agree the following (4)
15. Busy boss? (5,9)
18. Tonic for settlement of light bill? (3,2,9)
22. In favour of English style of anipasto? (9)
24. Daggers drawn in Nobel institution (5)
25. Shadow boxer? (3)

26. Abnormal case (9)
27. Mad, but not silly-headed - just goofy (5)
28. Tax on goods and service (4)
29. Role of the fly in destruction of *Erithacus rubecula* (10)

DOWN
1. Still with no score, on is doomed to failure (4,4)
2. High voices heard on Paris roundabout (8)
3. It spins to produce a lot (15,7)
4. Not the front entrance to the Savoy, say? (5-4)
5. Adventure in the seventies (5)
7. WI lass, a refined maker of toast? (7)
8. Advertisement for the big picture (6)



9. Joint-advisor, we hear, got the solumn prepared (14)
16. Badly scared, Jersey provided this venerated institution (6,3)
17. Unattractive aspect of hybrid fruit on head (8)
19. Fruit gone off to Capri? (7)
20. Repeat - to be well-read, Latin is not necessary (7)
21. Where plank-walker goes finally, hurt? (6)
23. Vagrant to stop around river (5)

Mansell revelling in his move from grid to green

Andy Farrell sees a former driver enjoy a foursomes win at Sunningdale

Having checked out of his hotel yesterday morning, the first thing Nigel Mansell had to do after completing his first-round match in the 56th Sunningdale Foursomes was find a room for the night. Mansell and his partner, the aptly named John Puit, will be teeing up again today after beating the former Ryder Cup player Paul Way and Terry Crawley 3 and 2.

Mansell may have taken the advice of Michael King too literally. "You'll get thrashed," the former Tour player, inevitably known as "Queenie," had said. In fact, Mansell, who has a handicap of 2.6 at Woodbury Park, the course he owns near Exeter, had taken money off King and Sam Torrance in practice on Tuesday. A certain world No 1 was also involved in the build-up.

"I spoke to Greg Norman on the phone last night and he just said to stay focused," Mansell explained. "He is a great motivator. Greg got me going in golf in the early eighties and we have a very good friendship."

Mansell even played in the 1988 Australian Open at Royal Sydney before his Formula One world championship ambitions took over. Now, the reverse is true. "Unless someone gives me a car I can win in, I'm concentrating on golf this year. For the first time ever I'm free to play golf

and I'm enjoying it. I am going to play as many events as I can." This event is traditionally the start of the British season, bringing together an assorted collection of professionals and amateurs, both men and women. Mansell had chosen his partner well. Puit, a business consultant, is a Sunningdale member and was a professional when in 1973 he won the tournament, with Miss M Everard, had taken money off King and Sam Torrance in practice on Tuesday. A certain world No 1 was also involved in the build-up.

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And a beer to go with it.

BEST SELLING PREMIUM CASK ALE SINCE 1777

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